

# JEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

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## THE THEOLOGY OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND THE LOCAL CHURCHES

— *E. R. Hambye*

THE STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION IN THE CHURCH

— *Xavier Koodapuzha*

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# JEEVADHARA

— A Journal of Christian Interpretation —

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# The People of God

## THE THEOLOGY OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES

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# JEEVADHARA

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# Editorial

THIS century, especially the last few decades, has seen great progress in ecclesiological studies and ecumenical relations. The understanding of the ecclesial reality of the other Churches and the quest for Christian unity are the natural outcome of this new atmosphere. The time of useless polemics is over, and the people are ready to think of those factors which unite them rather than those which separate them. The new awareness of ecclesial solidarity and the ardent thirst for Christian unity have turned into an irresistible force which no man-made barrier can resist. This new development in the Church largely owes its inspiration to the World Council of Churches and Vatican II.

The rediscovery of the importance of the local Churches is a remarkable achievement of our period. The local Church cannot be conceived of as a territorial or administrative subdivision of the universal Church. The Church of Christ cannot be reduced to a mere organization to be supervised at various levels by a hierarchy of superiors of different ranks. The Catholic Church is a communion of local Churches. There is room for preserving and developing the abundant heritage of each Church for the enrichment of the universal Church through a copious variety of organic unity. The Eastern Ecclesiology is a source of inspiration in this healthy and natural growth. A true understanding of their relevance will make the local Churches more mature and responsible and liberate them from an exaggerated centralizing legalism which stifles and frustrates initiatives.

When we speak about the importance of the local Churches we are equally aware of the possible danger of the other extreme which is exclusivism and sectarianism. A Christian community should never be isolated. The Church of Christ should be a force to unify the world. This unity is



quite different from uniformity. Unity is profound; uniformity is shallow and superficial. The Church of Christ belongs to all cultures and people.

In this issue the first article by E. R. Hambye analyses the conciliar statements of Vatican II on the local or individual Churches. It is a background for the subsequent studies. In the second article X. Koodapuzha briefly analyses the structural evolution in the Church and points out how the Catholic Church, conceived of as a communion of the local Churches during the first millennium, gradually turned into a mighty organization in the second. In the next article J. B. Chethimattam points out the consequences of decentralization. The author shows how the Church will be more mature and catholic when the local Churches are more indigenous and have greater initiatives and responsibilities. M. Vellanickal's study on the Liberty of the Children of God in the local Churches reveals the richness of Christian liberty and how it should be reflected in the life of a local Church. The bulletin prepared by A. Cherukarakunnel presents some aspects of the life and activities of the early Christian community in India.

It is my firm belief that our Church in India has a great contribution to make to the Church Universal. This needs serious study and reflection. An awareness of our mission and the realization of the nature of the role we have to play, will make us more mature Christians and better citizens of our great nation.

St Thomas Seminary,  
Kottayam- 10.

Xavier Koodapuzha



# The Second Vatican Council And The Local Churches

## Some Reflections

### Introduction

THERE has been much writing and research nowadays on the Church and her structures. Large-scale investigation and discussion have taken place on such vexed questions as the basic characteristics of the ecclesial awareness enjoyed by the early Christians. Much has also been written of late on the Church and the Churches, i. e., on the universal and particular life of the Christian community.

As will be seen in the course of this very incomplete notes, the many texts found among the documents of Vatican II are real landmarks in the long history of ecclesiology. Not only are they the results of past studies, going back at least to Vatican I, but they have also speeded up research on the various aspects of the Church and their connection with the day-to-day life of her members. Moreover, the ecumenical progress, often little short of miraculous, witnessed for the last eight years, has had, still has, and certainly will have, an increasing influence on such research.

Our study has a very limited scope. It is written under the form of historico-theological remarks on the main conciliar texts which are relevant to a theology and practice of the Church considered here under its aspect of localisation, i. e., the various Churches which are, or will be, rooted in such and such a place and milieu.

### Conciliar Documentation

The very nature of this study demands that the texts published by the Council be listed here.

We first thought of following the chronological order, i. e., of giving the texts according to the sessions when they were officially promulgated. However, as is well known from the many eye-witness accounts of the conciliar proceedings, the council fathers took up the various topics rather according to an order of urgency than to any preplanned succession. Although there can be found within the life of the Council something like a doctrinal unfolding, it is not so important as to justify the use here of the chronological order. Therefore the texts should rather be presented, so it seems to us, according to the importance of the documents in which they are found. Since it cannot be doubted that the Constitution on the Church enjoys the central place as expressing the main preoccupation of the Christian awareness, we begin with the texts found therein.

The English translation is taken from the issues of *The Clergy Monthly* with corrections when deemed necessary. The phrases related to the local or particular Churches are italicized by us.

## 1. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*

No. 13, par. 3.

"...Not only, then, is the People of God made up of diverse peoples, but its inner structure also is composed of various ranks .... Hence also within the ecclesial communion *particular Churches* hold a rightful place and enjoy their own traditions without prejudice to the primacy of the Chair of Peter; its office is to preside over the entire gathering of charity (St Ignatius N. *Ad Rom.* Praef.), to safeguard legitimate differences, while yet careful that such distinctiveness serve rather than impair unity...."<sup>1</sup>

No. 23 par. 1.

"Collegiate union is shown also in the mutual relations of each bishop with the *particular Churches*

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1. *The Clergy Monthly*, 1965, pp. 138 - 39.

and with the Universal Church.... The individual bishops, nonetheless, are the visible principle and foundation of unity in their *particular Churches* which are fashioned after the model of the Universal Church. The one and only Catholic Church comes into being in these *particular Churches* and is made up of them. That is how each individual bishop represents his own Church, while all the bishops together with the pope represent the entire Church in the bonds of peace, love and unity."<sup>2</sup>

par. 2.

"The individual bishops, placed in authority over *particular Churches*, exercise their pastoral rule over the portion of the People of God that has been committed to them, but not over the other Churches, nor over the Universal Church...."<sup>3</sup>

par. 4.

"By a dispensation of Providence *various Churches* established in various places by the Apostles and their successors, have in the course of time coalesced in various groups, organically unified, which without detriment to the unity of faith and to the one single constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, their own theological and spiritual patrimony. Some of these Churches, notably the ancient Patriarchal Churches, have been, as it were, parent-stocks of the faith, and have begotten daughter Churches with which they remained connected, down to our own day by a close bond of charity in their sacramental life and in mutual respect for their rights and duties. Such a harmonious variety of *local Churches* is all the more splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church. Along similar lines the Episcopal Conferences of

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2. Ib. pp. 145 - 46

3. Ib. p. 146



today are in a position to do much fruitful work towards the practical application of the collegiate spirit.”<sup>4</sup>

No. 27, par. 1.

“The bishops, as vicars and legates of Christ, govern the *particular Churches* entrusted to them, by counsel, exhortation and example, but also by their authority and sacred power.”<sup>5</sup>

## II. Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishop in the Church: *Christus Dominus*

No. 3, par. 2.

“They (the bishops) exercise that (pastoral office) individually in reference to that portion of the Lord’s flock assigned to them, thus each one taking care of the *particular Church* committed to him, or sometimes also some of them jointly providing for certain common needs of several Churches.”<sup>6</sup>

No. 11. par. 1.

“The diocese is a portion of the People of God, which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the co-operation of the presbyterium; thus, the diocese, intimately connected with its pastor and gathered together by him in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, constitutes a *particular Church*; therein is truly present and operative the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ.”

par. 2.

“Each bishop, to whose care a *particular Church* is entrusted, feeds his sheep in the Lord’s name

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4. Ib. pp. 146–47

5. Ib. p. 150

6. Ibid. 1966, p. 48

under the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, as his own, ordinary and immediate pastor who performs therein the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing. He must however acknowledge the rights which legitimately belong to the patriarchs or to the other hierarchical authorities.”<sup>7</sup>

No. 36, par. 1.

“From the early centuries of the Church, bishops in charge of *particular Churches* were impelled by common fraternal charity and by the zeal for the universal mission committed to the Apostles to unite together their resources and their wills for the promotion of both the common good and the welfare of the *individual Churches*. Therefore came into being synods, provincial councils and finally plenary councils; in them the bishops decided on such norms as to be kept either in the teaching of the true Faith or in the ordering of ecclesiastical discipline.”<sup>8</sup>

### III. Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches:

#### *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*

No. 2.

“The Holy Catholic Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, consists of believers who are organically united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same sacraments and the same government. Grouped in different communities around their hierarchies, the faithful constitute *particular Churches* or rites. The Catholic Church, indeed, means to keep intact the traditions of each particular Church, and she wants to adapt her mode of life to the various needs of times and places.”<sup>9</sup>

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7. Ibid. 1966, pp. 50 - 51

8. Ibid. p. 64

9. Ibid. 1965, p. 87

The two following *numbers* mention time and again the phrase *particular Church* as indicating an individual Eastern Church or community.

#### IV. Decree on Ecumenism: *Unitatis Redintegratio*

No. 14.

"....Among other important matters, it is a pleasure for this Council to remind everyone that there exist in the East many *particular or local Churches* among which the Patriarchal Churches hold first place, many of which trace their origins back to the Apostles themselves...."<sup>10</sup>

#### V. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church:

*Ad Gentes*

No. 6, par. 4.

"In this missionary activity of the Church' different conditions sometimes obtain simultaneously: first the beginning or planting period, then a new kind of existence, the period of youth. When all these are over the missionary activity of the Church does not cease; but now it behoves the established *particular Churches* to continue that action and to preach the Gospel to all those who are still outside the Church."<sup>11</sup>

The entire Chapter III is entitled *Particular Churches* unfolding, as it were, the previous text. There such Churches are called *Young Churches* (nos. 19, 20, 22), *Local Churches*, (ibid.), *Particular Churches* (n. 20), *New Particular Churches* (n. 22).<sup>12</sup>

These are the main conciliar texts which fall under the purview of our study.

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10. Ibid. 1965, p. 64

11. Ibid. *Supplement* 8 (1966-67) pp. 10-11

12. Ib. pp. 20-27



Before making a quick commentary on the mind of the Council concerning the local Church, there is some justification in approaching it within a historico-theological perspective.

### Ecclesiology in Retrospect

It would be tantamount to unfairness if we were here to squeeze into such a short treatment a historical survey of ecclesiological developments related to the local Churches. In order to keep a balance between a protracted exposition of the question and a superficial sketch, it seems desirable to emphasize the main stages of this ecclesiological history, leaving out what is less relevant.

From the very first decades of Christianity, the awareness of belonging to a particular community was quite strong. This is vouched for by the writings of the New Testament, particularly those of St Paul. According to L. Cerfaux, the word *ecclesia* indicated in the mind of the Apostle first and foremost the Church of Jerusalem as standing for the assembly of the People of God in the desert. Then it came also to be applied by Paul to the new communities of Jews and Pagan converts in the diaspora. 'It signifies the local Christian community or the assembly of the local Christians'.<sup>13</sup> Whatever was the original and secular meaning of the word itself in its Hellenistic context, it faithfully kept the primitive character of the Christian assembly, i.e. 'the bringing together in *act* of the local Church'.<sup>14</sup> Yet, at the same time, Paul kept clear in his outlook the sense of *ecclesia* as indicative of the whole community, the New Israel, the messianic people, with its final fulfilment in heaven.

Hence it becomes obvious that within the typological and symbolical theology of the New Testament and of St Paul there were already various levels of an ecclesial awareness. The particular Churches are indeed given the full name of

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13. L. Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St Paul*, New York, 1959 p. 192.

14. *Ib.* p. 189

*ecclesia*,<sup>15</sup> but they are only concrete, local expressions of the whole community of the believers. Even the liturgical assembly of the local Christians is the *ecclesia*, as well as the building itself where it gathers. At any rate 'Church' and 'Churches' were already then used indifferently.

It is important to notice that such modern phrases as 'particular Church', 'local Church', so often met with in the conciliar documentation, are not traditional as such. The Early Church did not know them, but used the word 'Church', adding to it either the place or the name of its inhabitants

Be that as it may, the same ambiguity about the term *ecclesia* prevailed among the post-Apostolic and later Fathers. A Christian leader like St Cyprian of Carthage, who was so acutely conscious of his episcopal office as the living symbol of his own Church, dealt, however, almost exclusively with the more universal use of *ecclesia* in his short but capital treatise *On the Unity of the Church*; or rather he assumed a synthetical approach that saw at the same time both the universal and local importance of the name. As for his Greek predecessors, Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons, they remained faithful to the Apostolic ambiguity of the term.

Yet, owing to the need for maintaining the Apostolic Tradition against the Gnostics and other aberrant movements, there was in the course of the second century, a growing tendency to insist on the universality of the Apostolic Tradition represented by the Church as Catholic. This means the Church as universally found upholding the same basic tenets and Christian attitudes in spite of local diversity.

Meanwhile, the local Churches had already begun that process of grouping together under either an important leader or a capital headquarters or both. Such a process would ultimately, in the East, lead to the forming of the patriarchates, and in the West to such primates as that of Carthage. It also

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15. J. Danielou 'The Catholic Tradition' in E. O'Brien, *The Convergence of Traditions*, New York, 1967, p. 40.

helped the Roman See to become more and more aware of its universal mission. Such groupings found other regional applications in the West, for example in Milan, for a while, and later on in Spain.

It is well known that the further ecclesial evolution in the West witnessed developments rather different from those in the East. Whereas the latter kept a vivid sense of the regional Churches, either patriarchal or quasi-patriarchal,<sup>16</sup> the growing authority enjoyed by the Roman see in the West tended to identify the whole of Western Europe with the Catholic Church. Though such developments did not really materialise until the 12th/13th cc., their origins are quite clearly traceable hundreds of years earlier. Yet this does not mean that the sense of the local Church had vanished from the West. It was there at least during the first millennium. Parallel to the growing awareness of the universal authority of the Roman See, there was also a consciousness of the local or regional roots of the Churches. It was expressed both by the system of episcopal elections, and by successive attempts here and there to fabricate legendary accounts in order to prove their apostolic foundations.

Granting that episcopal elections<sup>17</sup> were increasingly tampered with by the secular princes, leading to the feudalisation of many a local Church, yet there were other Churches whose relations with Rome were at best rather distant and which still enjoyed a sense of their local, if not regional, or even 'national', character. Even at that time we often meet with an ecclesial consciousness at the level of the province.

In spite of what has often been written, the Gregorian reform did make a conscious and organized attempt not only at securing the spiritual liberty of the bishops but also at restoring a measure of localisation. Though its success in that

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16. R. Rouquette, *Une nouvelle chrétienté. Le premier synode épiscopal*, Paris 168, p. 41.

17. E. Roland, 'Election des Evêques', in *D. T. C.* (Vacant & Mangenot), IV - B, col. 2256 - 81.



direction was short-lived, some measure of localisation was achieved by the beginning of the 12th c. The medieval Churches remained very much involved in secular affairs with notable exceptions. Moreover, the growing and ever renewed contest between the papal government and the secular, and the imperial/royal efforts to control Church affairs, often resulted in doing away altogether with the spiritual awareness of the local Churches. Finally the complete disarray of the metropolitan authority in many cases was also not conducive to the maintenance of a certain regional consciousness through ecclesiastical provinces.

The further history of the Medieval Church in the West saw repeated attempts at reviving the awareness of the particular Churches. Unfortunately these were inspired by the conciliar movement, which was built up more on legal principles than on theological ones. They also became mixed up with royal nationalism rather than a genuine desire to restore the spiritual content of the local Church. In spite of the leadership assumed so successfully by the Papacy during the post-Tridentine period, the Church in the West found herself almost torn asunder by such strong pulls as papal supremacy and the repeated attempts to bring the Churches under absolute princes (Gallicanism, Febronianism, Josephism, etc.). Even the originally genuine desire of many Jansenists to see the local Church restored as a living community foundered on the rocks of quasi-heretical views or of exaggerated primitivism.

On the other hand it cannot be doubted that the Eastern Churches taken as a whole managed to keep a better balance between the sense of the Church universal and the awareness of the Church local. One may venture so far as to say that among those Churches which belonged to the Syrian tradition the conception of the Church as the whole, universal community of the People of God, was preserved more vividly, as can be proved by the many patristic and liturgical texts belonging to the Syrian world. It may well be the result of its Judaeo-Christian back-ground with its insistence on the new covenant and on the new chosen people.

Eastern Christianity kept perhaps more faithfully to the original counterpoise between the universality and the localisation of the Church. One of the most common expressions of this occurs in many litanies, or prayers of the faithful, of the Eastern liturgies. Sometimes they invoke prayer for the 'welfare of the Churches of God', and at other times intercede on behalf of the Catholic Church.

Even the Byzantine tradition which tended to assimilate the Byzantine empire to the whole Christian world, did not overlook the regional, if not local, character of the Church. This was not only due to the strong emphasis on the patriarchates, which eventually led to a kind of 'federal' ecclesiology; but the episcopal elections remained more symbolical of the local Church, at any rate from the 8th c. The bishops were mostly chosen by their co-provincial prelates, if not by the patriarchal synod itself.<sup>18</sup> In other Eastern Churches the local election of bishops continued for a much longer time. Even the relatively smaller size of most of the Eastern eparchies helped a great deal towards nurturing the awareness and love of the local Church amongst its members.

Until fairly recently little progress was made in the West towards recapturing a basic sense of the local Church as a 'theological' reality, though it was to be found here and there. In such cases the importance of the see, its historical value, and sometimes its own liturgical customs too (Milan, Toledo, Lyons, etc.) helped to maintain a minimum of this awareness. The ecclesiology which prepared the way for Vatican I and followed it did not really include a sense of the local Church. In more modern times the often successful attempt towards developing a spirituality of the diocesan clergy as intimately bound up with their bishop has been pregnant with happy consequences as far as restoring the awareness of the local Church is concerned. The same can be said, and in a much stronger way, of the all embracing liturgical movement in the West.

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18. Ibid., 2258 - 59.

## Vatican II Theology on the Particular Churches

The phrase *Particular Church* was used in the Latin Code of Canon Law (c. 329, par. 1), but I have failed to trace the origin of the expression. At any rate it cannot be very old, and must have been originally introduced chiefly to indicate the community ruled by the bishop as distinct from, though included in, the Universal Church.

It is common knowledge that the way for Vatican II was prepared by large-scale influential movements, Biblical, Liturgical and Ecclesiological. Though these were not equally strong in all the countries where the Catholic Church was sufficiently represented, yet their fruits were quite available to the conciliar Fathers when they met.

In giving an intelligible answer to the question 'What is the Church?', one cannot ignore the fact that both historically (having no time for other discussions) and theologically (with papal authority on the increase) Vatican I was obliged to leave out questions concerning 'the rest of the Church'. Moreover, there had always been in some way or other a tension in the Church between unity and diversity, and this should have been fully exploited in case the Church had wanted to give a fair account of herself.

Yet, it is known today that the first *schema* of the Constitution of the Church omitted any clear treatment either of the local Churches or the patriarchates. Later, when the texts on those topics were discussed and voted on, hardly any opposition arose against their insertion, such as there was in the case of the episcopal collegiality.<sup>19</sup>

In the conciliar documents, the phrase *Particular Church* means first of all a diocese. Its bishop both symbolises and actualises the Church as the local and mystical community gathering the People of God through the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the Eucharist. Such Christianity

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19. G. Philips, *L'Eglise et son mystère...*, I, p. 32.



pursuing its life at the local level does not exclude, but rather contains, the various communities (parishes, religious, etc.) making up the diocese.<sup>20</sup> Hence the bishop is much more than the chief authority of his Church; he is the permanent fountain-head of its life in Christ, its quickener and its spiritual father.

Each local Church images the visible realisation of the Church Universal, in which it participates. This must be so since it is the Church actuated here, there and everywhere. The Particular Churches enjoy their own traditions which, far from fostering a lifeless uniformity, enrich unity through diversity. To quote Mgr Philips, 'each particular Church is the Church of Christ as present in a locality and she is endowed with all the means of salvation given to his People by the Lord'.<sup>21</sup> Such a particular Church, seen here as the diocese, with its stable and complete organization, can be said to be of divine foundation, i.e., belonging to the realm of Christ's intention.

From the viewpoint of the Church as a communion, the local Churches are a necessity; without them there could not be any real communion at all. We are far advanced here from an ecclesiology, still so often held unconsciously by many Catholics, which takes uniformity as equivalent to unity, and seeks its ideal in reducing local diversity as far as humanly possible. On the contrary, the conciliar approach sums up the theological principles which dominate its ecclesiology of communion: the Eucharist as the sacramental origin and nourishment of the Church both as the universal and local community of the believers; the constant fostering of charity peace and concord between the local Churches in order to form them into a family and to prevent the danger of any 'sacred egoism'; the collegiality of the bishops as leaders of the local communities so that Christ as the 'apostle of the Father' may carry on His message and share His life; the

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20. Ibid., p. 342

21. Ibid., p. 308

supreme office of the pope as the living symbol of unity and the guardian of Christian love among the Churches.

Not without a kind of spiritual enthusiasm, the conciliar texts have often succeeded in recapturing that deep-seated sense of the Church, especially of the local Church, already found in St Ignatius of Antioch, without diminishing in any way a vision of the Church Universal, which was kept and developed in the first centuries, e.g. by St Cyprian, and some of the great Fathers of the 4th and 5th centuries. It is also refreshing to note that the Council did not bypass the eucharistic character of the local Church, not to speak here of the Word of God proclaimed therein and gathering its members together. A Eucharistic approach of this kind is also traditional, at any rate since St Ignatius of Antioch, and St Augustine did not overlook it.

It must be confessed however that in later centuries it was often left out from western ecclesiology. More recently Orthodox writers, such as those belonging to the Russian theological schools of Paris and Washington, have strongly insisted on the sacramental, above all the eucharistic, foundation of the local Christian community. Though couched sometimes in exaggerated terms, and not always escaping the influence of German idealist philosophy, their contributions have been timely reminders of a basic tradition in the Church.<sup>22</sup> The council took good note of such progress in ecumenical thinking.

### Eastern Churches and Patriarchates

It would be wrong to believe that the *Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches* was an exceptional document of its kind. True enough it was introduced and discussed not without much hesitation about the need for such a document at all. Ecume-

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22. See N. Affassanieff 'L'Eglise qui préside dans l'amour' in *La primauté de Pierre dans l'Eglise Orthodoxe*, Neuchâtel, 1960, pp. 8-14; A. Schmemmann, 'The Orthodox Tradition', in E. O'Brien, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14, 29-30; A. Asnaghi, 'A proposito di Ecclesiologia eucaristica', *Scuola Catt.* 92 (1964), pp. 443-47.

nical circles utterly disliked it as running counter to the Ecumenical movement itself, especially to the growing understanding between Catholics and the Orthodox Churches. Some representatives of the Eastern Catholics did not appreciate it either, since it would appear that the Eastern Churches were treated as being on the outskirts of the Catholic Church.<sup>23</sup>

In spite of opposition it was finally voted for almost unanimously, not only in order to provide the Eastern Catholics with a more vivid sense of their identity, but also to follow up the already known texts on the Christian East, especially those found in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*.

From a number of texts dealing with the ecclesiological tradition of the Christian East, we can conclude that this tradition is now clearly regarded as belonging to the Church as the Universal community of all believers. This is why also the local Church in the mind of the Council is not exclusively identified with the diocese. The Eastern Churches, more authentically their patriarchates, stand for a particular Church. Whatever be the meaning of the latter phrase, it would have been more relevant and enlightening to speak here of autonomous Churches.<sup>24</sup>

In some cases, at least their apostolic origins are the main reason for their autonomy within the *Catholica*. The late Fr. Rouquette, S. J. was right when he commented thus: "This means that the role of the patriarchs is regarded as continuing the role of the Apostles, though there may not be

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23. Already the late patriarch Maximos IV had mentioned the basic reaction of an Eastern Catholic confronted with the western approach: 'The Eastern Church does not need to be fondled as a weakling, nor coaxed like an *enfant terrible*. She does not need either special 'cares'. It is a branch of the Church, which asks only to be given the rightful place in Catholicism which is today too heavily Latin in its constitution and mentality', quoted by J. M. Hoeck, in *Commentary*....., v. II, p. 313, n. 5.

24. J. M. Hoeck, *ibid.*, p. 314.

necessarily any historical relation between one given patriarchal see and one individual Apostle..."<sup>25</sup> An official acknowledgment of the apostolic or quasi-apostolic roots of some patriarchates is a remarkable development within an ecclesiology which still feels shy of anything bordering on a new theological synthesis between East and West. On the one hand this shows also that the Council, so open as it was, did not really succeed in offering such a synthesis; on the other hand it indicates that there is hope for the future, and that theological pluralism must finally be admitted, even in the awareness of the Church of today and tomorrow. Otherwise how can we sincerely see in that grouping of churches together into larger units – the patriarchates – the guidance of Divine Providence?<sup>26</sup>

This does not mean, however, that a particular Church vested in a diocese cannot be of Apostolic origin as well. For the bishop through his share in collegiality participates in the Apostolic characteristic of the whole Church. Yet there is, in the case of some important sees in the East, a living connection with Apostolic times, which for ever marks them off as enjoying a special theological significance different from, though complementary with, that of the rest of the Church.

At any rate this much is certain: The Council has laid the theological foundations of an ecclesiology of communion, manifested by diversity in unity. Though it has not succeeded in bridging the differences remaining between East and West, it has at least opened the door to ecclesial and therefore theological pluralism in the Church Universal.

One proof of such pluralism is that the conciliar texts, especially those dealing with the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* (c. g. n. 22) insist on the local Church as fulfilling the cultural and social aspirations of a given area. This is not only good 'missiology', already proclaimed by such missiological pioneers as Schindlin and P. Charles, but it adds the much needed human dimension that a mere ecclesiology of the local

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25. R. Rouquette, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

26. *Constitution on the Church*, n. 23, par. 4.



Church could eventually miss. All the same the cultural and social integration manifested by the local Church, e. g. by the younger Churches in process of development, cannot be regarded as the only and essential basis of the localisation of the Church. I even wonder whether it is not the effect of localisation rather than its foundation.

### Further Prospects

It is not uncommon nowadays to speak already of further elaboration of Vatican II. Some even speak of another Council which, on certain important questions, might go much further than what we hold today as the 'progressive' mind expressed by many a conciliar declaration. Since the Church is life and development, constantly engaged in making further synthesis of her Tradition with the pastoral situation she encounters, the ecumenical world of today and tomorrow calls, indeed, for a constant revision and broadening of the ecclesiological principles set up by Vatican II.

We would like to mention here one further possibility of development, which is closely related to our present topic. It arises from the ecumenical problem raised by that living reality which cannot be overlooked in reflections on ecclesiology, i. e., the co-existence side by side of Churches and communities enjoying their own ethos in the same land, the same region, or the same area.

Such an ecclesial situation is not quite new in Christianity; in certain regions, like Eastern Europe, the Middle East and even India, it goes back to centuries past, to the 5th and 6th centuries in certain well-known cases. In more modern times it has more or less spontaneously developed in the West as well, for instance amongst the Protestant Churches or even between important Reformed Churches and the traditional Catholic Church of the land.

This means that today, and perhaps tomorrow as well, Christianity, seen in ecumenical prospect, should include not only one local Church in a given milieu, and even nation, but

apparently several. Until recently, even the Byzantine Orthodox tradition agreed with the Latin tradition in regarding the single local Church as the theological ideal going back to apostolic times. But can the ecumenical Church of tomorrow still keep so strict an ideal? Can it not realise that even at the local level one Christian community cannot exhaust all the possibilities of ecclesial expressions?

Therefore there is a growing trend among ecumenical-minded theologians to foresee that the pattern or *typos* of ecclesial life and ideals could be represented by several local Churches. This is how some of the most important projects of union amongst our Protestant brethren have been made possible. Some Catholic thinkers were not slow in taking up the new ecumenical challenge. This is how Cardinal J. Willebrands, president of the Roman Secretariat for Christian unity, puts it in a sermon preached in Cambridge last January 1970: 'When I speak here of a *typos* of the Church, I do not mean to describe the local or particular Church in the sense the Vatican Council has given to it... As distinct from this notion of the local Church, with all the theological meaning it contains, the notion I submit to your attention, that of a *typos* of a Church does not primarily designate a diocese or a national Church (although in some cases it may more or less coincide with a national Church). It is a notion which has its own phenomenological aspects, with their particular theological meaning... When there is a long coherent tradition, commanding men's love and loyalty, creating and sustaining an harmonious and organic whole of complementary elements, each of which supports and strengthens the other, you have the reality of a *typos*'.<sup>27</sup> The Cardinal lists such elements as theological method and approach, liturgical expression (perhaps a more decisive element, he says), spiritual and devotional tradition, canonical discipline, and he concludes that 'through the combinations of all of these, a *typos* can be specified...'

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27. Sermon of Cardinal Willebrands at Great St Mary's Cambridge, 18th January, 1970., in *S. P. C. U. Information Service*, 3 (June 1970), pp. 13 - 14.

He continues: 'Different *typoi* exist in countries where eastern and western Churches live together. If within one nation two *typoi* are so closely related, that in a situation of full communion between them, Providence draws them into coalescence, the authentic and strong elements of each will take their place in an enriched unity... The life of the Church needs a variety of *typoi* which would manifest the full catholic and apostolic character of the one and holy Church. If we are only going to fossilize, common sense would seem to suggest that it is not very important whether we do so together or separately. Unity is vital only if it is a vital unity...'

Nobody will miss the allusions to situations which are well known today in various countries. Voices were raised recently to re-introduce after years of cold storage the idea of an 'Anglican Patriarchate', as the *typos* of the Anglican heritage within the Catholic Church. Elsewhere also similar existing ecclesial realities will prompt the real ecumenical-minded leaders and thinkers to favour similar solutions.

Hence in the future the localisation of the Church cannot be regarded any more, as it was until recently, as something merely canonical. It possesses a permanent theological depth which allows, more and more, a greater variety within the same unity. Granting that the latter can still be rent by overemphasis on local or regional Churches, yet in a world where a growing awareness of basic unity prevails among apparently separated Christians, there is more hope than fear of seeing diversity, even a typological diversity, with various local Churches fulfilling various patterns of ecclesial life, nourishing unity rather than endangering it. In this lies, today and tomorrow, one of the most authentic Christian hopes of ecumenical relations.

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# The Structural Evolution in the Church

As students of theology today we cannot fail to notice a turning point in the development of Ecclesiology. The recent post-conciliar developments and studies have made giant strides in this field. *Lumen Gentium*, the most important contribution of Vatican II, has clearly opened new hopeful horizons for theological enquiry. Every enquiry of this kind should start with an objective analysis of the historical background. In this period of renewal, revival and restoration we should examine the different phases of the growth and development of the Church. Such an analysis will not only help us understand what is essential and accidental in her structure, but also will show us the sound principles to be followed in making the Church relevant to the people of today.

The realization of the importance of the local Churches is a remarkable rediscovery of our time. The dignity, discipline, liturgy, tradition, culture and spiritual heritage of the local Churches remain to be studied in detail. The existence of the different local Churches is the best manifestation of the Church universal. The preaching of the Word of God, celebration of the Mysteries of Christ and the living witness of the Christian faith manifest the ecclesial life of a Christian community. The local Christian community should not be conceived of as a mere administrative portion of the Church. The local Church is fully *ekklesia*. This new awareness of the importance of the local Churches leads us to the authentic traditions of the Church of the early centuries where the universal Church was conceived of as the communion of the local Churches.

In this article we intend to analyse briefly some of the important phases of the organizational development of the Church into its present structure and the various factors which have influenced it.

## A. The Early Church

The first seven chapters of the Acts of the Apostles are the main source of information we have about the primitive Church of Jerusalem immediately after the Ascension of Our Lord. The author of the Acts shows us how the Kingdom, first preached to the Jews, had become the good news also to the Gentiles through the missionary activities of Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. In the Acts we have a report about the Christian community during the first fifteen years. We see the assembly of 120 believers under the leadership of the Apostles. They completed the number of the apostles with the election of Mathias.

The great event of Pentecost was the solemn manifestation of the giving of the Spirit of Christ and it created a great enthusiasm among the disciples. As we see in the Acts, as a result of the zealous preaching of the gospel, the number of the faithful was rapidly growing. The growth in number raised the question of organization. We see them leading a community life, sharing their goods in common. The Apostles felt the need of spending themselves exclusively for the preaching of the gospel. Therefore, at the request of the Apostles, the believers elected seven men of good repute whom the former approved and accepted for the ministry "with the laying of their hands on them".<sup>1</sup> But the ministry of the deacons was not confined to the service of the tables among the poor. For example, Stephen gets into theological disputes and Philip was a zealous missionary among the Samaritans.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian community were deeply aware of their special vocation and mission. They were immensely joyful and wanted to share their faith with others. The pneumatic aspect was quite evident in the ecclesial life. The descent of the Holy Spirit was repeated when new brethren were received into the Church.<sup>3</sup> The Holy Spirit was the source of inspir-

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1. Cfr. Acts. 6, 1 - 6

2. A. 21, 8

3. A. 8, 1f; 10, 44f

ation in the ecclesial life. They were filled with the Holy Spirit<sup>4</sup>

In their community the apostles formed the highest authority. They were the witnesses of the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the most authentic witnesses of the message of Christ their authority was unquestionable. In the Acts the words "Overseers" and "Elders", always used in plural, are sometimes synonymous.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this kind of organization was based on the tradition of the Jews who had Council of Elders to govern the synagogue in the diaspora. The Elders of the Church of Jerusalem with James heard the report of the missionary activities of Paul.<sup>6</sup> At Ephesus we have Paul's farewell address to the Elders of the Church.<sup>7</sup> Titus is asked to appoint Elders in every town.<sup>8</sup> Their qualifications and functions are also described.<sup>9</sup> In I Pet. we see the author identifying himself as a fellow Elder and requesting the others to be true shepherds of the flock.<sup>10</sup>

In the Jewish society the Council of Elders or ancients exercised their office not individually but collectively. But the word *Episkopos* meant an Overseer or Inspector who exercised his office personally as an individual. We may observe a hierarchical evolution from the *Presbyteroi* into *Episkopoi*. St Paul in his first epistle to Timothy speaks about the *Presbyteroi* "who preside".<sup>11</sup> The *Presbyteroi* and *Episkopoi* were ordained to their functions by the rite of the laying of hands on them.<sup>12</sup>

The Council of *Presbyteroi* along with the Apostles seems to have provided the earliest form of community administ-

4. A. 4, 8, 31

5. I Tim. 4, 14

6. A. 21, 18

7. A. 20, 17

8. Tit. 1, 5

9. Tit. 1, 6-9

10. I Pet. 5, 1-5

11. I Tim. 5, 17

12. A. 14, 23

ration. Because of the growing number of the Christian communities some of the *Presbyteroi* seem to have been given additional personal offices.

As there could not be successors to the apostles while they were alive, we see all these officers normally working in a group. In the absence of the apostles the *Episkopoi* led the Christian community. The disciples like Mark, Silas, Timothy, and Titus can be called the link between the *Episkopoi* and the monarchical bishops of the second century. They had special powers from the apostles to ordain presbyters and bishops and to found new Christian communities.<sup>13</sup>

## B. The Church in the Roman Empire.

A certain change in the structural and theological aspects of the Church is noticeable when the Church becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire. During the first three centuries, in place of the claims of superiority, authority and juridical rights, there was greater concern for maintaining the Lordship of Christ. God is the Lord of all and he gives his gifts to all as he wills. The ministers are only the stewards of the mysteries of Christ.<sup>14</sup> The steward's preoccupation should always be with maintaining the dominion of their Master and fulfilling his will. All the offices in the Church are intended to provide leadership in the *diakonia* of the community.<sup>15</sup>

St Cyprian, the most outstanding leader of the African Church in the 3rd century, enunciates the traditional principle followed in ecclesiastical administration:

"I have made it a rule, ever since the beginning of my episcopate, to make no decision merely on

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13. J. P. Mackey, *Tradition and Change in the Church*, Dublin 1968; cfr the article on the Institutional development of the monarchical episcopate pp. 77 - 85.

14. I Cor. 4, 1 - 2

15. Eph. 4, 12



the strength of my own personal opinion without consulting you (the priests and the deacons), without the approbation of the people".<sup>16</sup>

The whole ecclesiastical community had an active role in the choice of their ministers. Moreover, they had a very profound awareness of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their community, and consequently the voice of the community was respected as the manifestation of the will of God. Cyprian's words in the Council of Carthage reveal this consciousness.

"It has pleased us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with the admonition given by the Lord in many manifest visions".<sup>17</sup>

But the change of attitude was indeed great when the Church, as the official religion of the Roman Empire, began to enjoy imperial favours and privileges. Yves Congar in his historical survey of this evolution makes the following observation:

"The clergy were given important privileges, the bishops became *illustri*, and for all practical purposes, ranked with the senators. They were invested with public authority within the framework of the Empire, even in the sphere of the secular life of the cities.... The bishops frequently called on the imperial authority for support.... Under these circumstances, we ought perhaps to expect that authority would change its character and that it

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16. Cyprian, Ep. 14, 4 "*....nihil sine consilio vestro et sine consensu plebis mea privatim sententia gerere*"; In Ep. 34, 4, 1 "*non tantum cum collegis meis, sed cum plebe ipsa universa*" cfr. Congar, *Historical Development of Authority*, in the book *Problems of Authority*, ed. by J. M. Todd, London, 1964, p. 126, foot not 1.

17. Cyprian, Ep. LVII, 5; cfr. Congar, *Ibid.* p. 127, foot not 1.

would acquire a more secular, much more juridical meaning, based simply on the relation of superior to subordinate".<sup>18</sup>

### C. Territorial Jurisdiction

The introduction of territorial jurisdiction is an important turning point in the evolution of the administration of the local Churches. The territorial administrative system is closely connected with the civil administration of the Roman Empire.

The Roman Emperor Diocletian (284-305) had divided the territory into prefectures, dioceses and provinces. The word diocese (*dioikein*) etymologically means administration. The diocese is an administrative district. When Christianity was accepted as the official religion the immediate result was a close alliance between the civil and ecclesiastical administration. The persecuted Church became the unifying force of the Empire. In this background it was natural to the Church leaders to make use of those administrative systems effectively followed by the civil government.

The sixth canon<sup>19</sup> of the first Council of Nicea speaks about the territorial division of the ancient Churches.<sup>20</sup> The episcopal office enjoys jurisdiction over a particular territory. These dioceses began to be named after the city in which the bishop resided. The episcopal administration over a territory gave way to further organizational developments. The provincial capitals of the Roman Empire were the first centres of

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18. Yves Congar, *op. cit.* p. 128.

19. Kirch, *Enchir. Hist. Antiq.* no. 406: "*Antiqua consuetudo servetur per Aegyptum, Lybiam et Pentapolim, ita ut Alexandrinus episcopus horum omnium habeat potestatem, quia et urbis Romae episcopo parilis mos est. Similiter autem et apud Antiochiam ceterasque provincias suis privilegia servantur Ecclesiis. Illud autem generaliter clarum est, quod, si quis praeter sententiam metropolitani fuerit factus episcopus, hunc magna synodus definivit episcopum non esse oportere*".

20. In the East the word used for the diocese was Eparchy.

the Christian communities. The new Christian communities started by the Churches of the important centres had close relations with those centres. These relations were mutual. The Churches which undertook missionary activities and started new Christian communities began to be called mother Churches. From the fourth century the sees of these mother Churches were known by the title of Metropolitan sees.

The bishops of a particular province used to gather and discuss their common problems. This kind of grouping on a provincial basis created an organizational system under a provincial leader who was the Metropolitan. Provincial solidarity had its own advantages and disadvantages. In times of controversy the bishops of a particular province took a common stand, and a colour of provincialism was reflected even in doctrinal disputes.<sup>21</sup>

In the West the bishops of Rome and Carthage were the leaders of these provincial groupings. In the East, as is apparent in the canons of the Council, the association of the local Churches followed more or less a political division. The Bishop of Carthage used to invite all the bishops of the civil provinces of North Africa to his synods and all of them accepted his leadership. Similarly all the bishops of Italy attended the synods of the Bishop of Rome. Generally speaking Rome and Carthage were the metropolitan sees of the West. The bishops of Syria and of the whole of Eastern Asia Minor attended the synods at Antioch. The great Egyptian capital, Alexandria, was the centre of the Churches of Lybia and Pentapolis. The can. 2 of the Council of Constantinople (381) speaks of the attempts of the bishops of Ephesus,

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21. Cfr. Karl Baus, *From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*, ed. by H. Jedin and J. Dolan, London, 1965, pp. 353-360.

Heracleia and Caesarea to obtain supra-metropolitan dignity and rights.<sup>22</sup>

With the granting of political favours and privileges the Pastoral office of the bishops was called episcopal *jurisdiction*. Jurisdiction is a term from Roman law. According to canon law jurisdiction means the whole system of ecclesiastical government. It was used for the first time by Emperor Justinian in the *Novellae*.<sup>23</sup> Consequently a new distinction was made between the power of Order and the power of Jurisdiction. This distinction is subsequent to the *Decretum Gratiani*.<sup>24</sup> According to this view "government (jurisdiction) became distinct from Sacrament"! The power of Order was conferred by consecration and the power of Jurisdiction by canonical mission. It is quite revealing that the power of Jurisdiction was concerned mainly with the societal aspect of the Church.

#### D. The Patriarchal System of Government

The patriarchal system of government was the spontaneous and natural development of the ecclesial relations of the early centuries. This system was followed more or less effectively during the first millennium. The Patriarchs of the important centres played a very prominent part not only in

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22. The second canon deals with the territorial division of the dioceses and the order to be kept among them. Kirch, *Enchir. Hist. Antiq.* No. 647:

*"Quia sunt super diocesim episcopi, nequaquam ad ecclesias, quae sunt extra praefixos sibi terminos, accedant; nec eas hac praesumptione confundant; sed juxta canones Alexandrinus Antistes quae sunt in Aegypto regat solummodo; et Orientis episcopi Orientem tantum gubernent, servatis privilegiis, quae Nicaenis canonibus Ecclesiae Antiochenae tributa sunt. Asianae quoque dioeceseo episcopi ea solum quae sunt in Asiana dioecesi dispensent: nec non et Ponti episcopi ea tantum in Ponto; et Thraciarum, quae in Thraciis sunt, gubernent"*.

23. *Novellae*, No. 131, cap. 3; 120, cap. 6.

24. Cfr. art by Klaus Morsdorf, 'Jurisdiction', in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. III, pp. 229-31.



the government of their own rite or particular Church but also in the common affairs of the Church universal. The patriarchal centres of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople and Jerusalem were at times called the Pentarchy of the Church Universal!

The concept of the universal Church as the communion of the local Churches was well established in the patriarchal system of government. The Patriarchs followed the tradition of communicating the fact of their election to other Churches especially the Church of Rome.<sup>25</sup> The following system was pursued in their hierarchical elections. The election of a bishop was recognized by the metropolitan, and the election of a metropolitan had to be confirmed by the Patriarch. But when a new Patriarch was elected the other Patriarchs had to be approached for their consent. These letters of communion were called 'synodal letters'. Though these letters did not formally request confirmation they were sent to manifest the spirit of communion of the individual Churches headed by the Patriarchs. The Popes used to request synodal letters from the other Patriarchal Churches when there was any delay in communicating the fact of a new election. At the same time it should be noted that during the first millennium the Easterners were freely electing their Patriarchs and regulating their discipline, liturgy and legislation.

The term patriarch was used in the O. Testament for the head of a tribe or a big family. But this term is used in the Church for the head of a particular rite or an individual Church. It is a supra-episcopal institution.<sup>26</sup> The Council of Nicaea I recognized the patriarchal dignity of Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome. Besides, some other important episcopal

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25. Wilhelm De Vries in his study of the relation between Rome and Easterners analyses the whole problem. Cfr his article, 'The Origin of the Eastern Patriarchates and their relationship to the Power of the Pope,' *One in Christ*, 1966, pp. 50-59 and pp. 130-142.

26. Cfr. *Cleri Sanctitati*, can. 216, para 2.

sees were also granted a kind of pre-eminence in the East. A special place of honour was granted to the see of Jerusalem. But when Constantinople became the capital of the Roman Empire it claimed patriarchal leadership and dignity. The third canon of Constantinople I and the twenty-eighth canon of the Council of Chalcedon (451) repeated the claim of the see of Constantinople. Though the Roman Patriarch did not accept this claim of the see of Constantinople it gradually became the most important patriarchal see of the East.<sup>27</sup> During the first millennium the participation of the five Patriarchs constituted the moral universality of the Church. Among them the Patriarch of Rome always enjoyed the most important position because of the Petrine succession. At the same time it was a fact that he was particularly connected with the Western Church in his capacity of Patriarch. The Pope was the bishop of Rome, Metropolitan of the Roman province, Primate of Italy, Patriarch of the Roman Rite, and the visible head of the episcopal college.

### **E. Political Influence in the Church - (The POPE, the King of the Papal States)**

From the middle of the eighth century to the second half of the 19th century (754-1870) the Pope was not only the religious leader of the Church but also the king of the Papal States in central Italy. The political leadership of the Papacy was of very gradual development. The particular political situation in the West demanded an ever-growing involvement on the part of the Pope. Historians point out four factors for the formation of the Papal States.<sup>28</sup> They are the Lombard wars, the weakness of the Byzantine Emperors, religious disputes and the alliance between the Papacy and the Franks.

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27. The Council of Nicea I seems to have allowed almost similar status for Caesarea (in Cappadocea) over the civil diocese of Pontus, for Ephesus over the civil diocese of Asia and for Heracleia over the civil dioceses of Thrace.

28. Neill - Schmandt, *History of the Catholic Church*, Milwaukee, 1957, p. 134.

Generous donations from Emperors and wealthy men made the papacy very rich. The Pope gradually became the largest landholder in Italy. This territory known as the "patrimony of St Peter" was administered by Papal representatives and other officials. As a result there was an organized body of officials assisting the Pope. The influence of the Pope on the invaders of Italy was on the increase. Christianity had already spread among them and the powerful position of the Pope made its own impact on those around him. His evergrowing influence created a kind of tension between him and the Byzantine Emperor. Some of the religious controversies, especially the iconoclastic dispute, aggravated the strained relations between them. Sharp differences sometimes led to the use of force! The emerging leadership of the Pope entered a decisive stage with the political alliance with the Franks. In 754 Pope Stephen II cast off the semblance of allegiance to the Emperor at Constantinople by signing a political alliance with the Franks. This is a turning-point not only in the history of the Papacy but also of the whole of Europe. The Pope officially became the king of central Italy. The immediate result was a closer and more active involvement in the political affairs of Europe. After a few decades, at the time of the Frankish king Charlemagne, Pope Leo III revived the 'Roman Empire' by crowning the Frankish king Emperor of it!<sup>29</sup> We see, during the course of centuries, various developments in which the Popes play too secular a role.

## F. Changes in the Second Millennium

The ecclesial life of the different local Churches during the first millennium reveals the large areas of practical autonomy which they had achieved. Their autonomy was not

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29. Charlemagne considered himself a new David by divine commission to guide the Church, the new chosen People. He legislated on the clerical discipline, liturgy, religious instruction, etc. He baptized the Saxons on the point of sword. Even capital punishment was decreed as the penalty for violating the ecclesiastical laws.

regarded as a privilege granted to them by any other Church. It was the natural and organic development of their Christian life. But in the second millennium various developments in the West seem to follow a different trend especially in the attitude of the Latin Church towards other local Churches and the Eastern Churches in particular.

This new attitude is quite evident on the part of Rome with the creation of new Latin Patriarchates in the East. The creation of more than one Patriarch in the same rite was entirely against the venerable traditions of the first millennium. The new political situation in the West gave greater importance to the monarchical titles and prerogatives of the Pope, and the ancient Patriarchal title which was dear to the Eastern Churches became less attractive to the West. New Latin Patriarchates were created by the Pope at Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup> This innovation changed the traditional conception of the Patriarchal dignity and of the administrative structures centred on the Patriarch as the leader of a rite or a particular Church.

This new juridical situation widened the gap between the East and the West. Consequently the Ecumenical Councils which used to be convoked in the East during the first millennium began to be held in the West. In these Councils the Eastern Churches were not properly represented, and the decisions reflect more the western point of view. While in the early Councils the different ancient Churches were represented by their Patriarchs, in the second millennium we see the presence of different Patriarchs of the same Latin rite.

An overemphasis on the central authority in Rome is also quite noticeable. The creation of more than one Patriarch in the same rite narrowed down the importance of their role and paved the way for their dependence on the Roman Curia which was slowly taking shape. The practical autonomy and

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30. For the Pope the Church in these places was brought back from schism to obedience to the Holy See by the appointment of a Latin Patriarchate!



individuality of the ancient Eastern Churches, symbolized in the Patriarchal leadership, were conceived by Rome as privileges granted by the Pope. Rome was increasingly becoming the administrative centre of the whole Church, which did not leave much room for the autonomy of the local Churches. Pope Boniface VIII stated that the Holy See "has set up the patriarchates, the dignity of the metropolitans and the sees of the metropolitans, and the sees of the bishops."<sup>31</sup>

This kind of unilateral development in the light of Western traditions demanded a particular system of government in Rome. Even the attempts at reunion and the "symbols of Union" formulated in the Council of Florence were not understood in the same way by the Easterners and Westerners.<sup>32</sup> For the Greeks it was only a recognition of their ancient practices, while Rome, on the other hand viewed these as privileges generously granted by the Pope.

Rome was intervening in the affairs of the Eastern Churches in different ways. In 1553 there was the papal intervention in the East in the appointment of a Patriarch of the Chaldean Church. The Chaldean Patriarchal dignity had become hereditary and had reached its extreme in the 16th century. Many leading Chaldeans wanted to put an end to this abuse and they elected John Siud Sualaka, a monk, and sent him to Rome for confirmation as it was a departure from their own tradition. Pope Julius III confirmed the election and recognized him as Patriarch. Here we see an

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31. Raynaldi Annales Eccl. ad annum 1298, No. 20, Letter to the Armenians 11 Oct. 1298; *Romana sedes.... hinc sive patriarchatus cujuslibet apicem sive metropoleon primatus aut episcopatum cathedras vel ecclesiarum cujuscumque ordinis dignitatem instituit*".

32. For the Westerners the "privileges" of the Patriarchs were granted by the Pope. For the Greeks the Patriarchal rights were not at all Papal concessions! For them the 'formula of union' was only a guarantee of their rights and privileges and a western recognition of their autonomy.

intervention in a matter of great importance, for which the Easterners themselves were responsible.<sup>33</sup>

### G. The Development of the Roman Curia

The Roman Curia served as an administrative body like the court of a feudal lord or monarch. The cardinals, the close associates of the Pope, helped him in curial business. The growing centralization necessitated new administrative departments in the curia: the chancery, the apostolic chamber and the judicial tribunals. The consistory functioned as the supreme court of the Church. The policy of centralization was followed in many ways. The fourth Law Council is an example in point. The right of certifying the genuineness of relics, of granting of plenary indulgences and of canonization of saints were reserved to Rome. Certain grave sins were reserved to the Holy See for absolution. Moreover, different kinds of papal legates were sent out from Rome to see that the will of the Pope was obeyed in the different local Churches. These legates were of three kinds: *legati nati*, an honour attached to some important episcopal sees; *legati missi*, diplomatic representatives; and *legati a latere*, cardinals sent as special ambassadors on important missions. All the bishops were asked to meet the Pope regularly at fixed intervals and present a detailed report of the affairs of their Church. This kind of visit is called *ad limina*. A new ceremony called the conferring of the *pallium* was also introduced for the archbishops. Their installation was considered complete only after the bestowal of a woollen stole-like vestment by the Pope. All these new practices were supported by canonical legislations. The canonists of this period were deeply concerned in establishing theories and principles in support of the centralizing policy. The great canonists like Pope Innocent III, Gregory IX and Innocent IV fortified the administrative structures with legal distinctions and legislations. It was a golden age of canonical studies.

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33. Regest. Vat. Bull. Secret. Julii anno III. tom. 70, No. 1793, p. 235.

The policy of centralization on the monarchical pattern made no exceptions. The ancient Eastern Churches were absorbed into this canonical structure. The Papal Brief of Innocent IV *Sub Catholicae Professione Fidei* is pointed out as a proof of this policy. The organizational development of the department of the Roman curia to deal with the affairs of the Eastern Churches reveals its growing involvement in Eastern affairs. In 1573 Pope Gregory XIII started a Congregation called *Congregatio pro rebus Graecorum* which a few decades later was changed into the *Congregatio super reformatione Graecorum* by Pope Clement VIII. This congregation entered a new phase in 1622 when it became a part of the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* which was in charge of the missionary activities of the Roman Church. Pope Pius IX separated it as a department under the title *S. Congregatio de Propaganda Fide pro negotiis ritus Orientalis*. The growing administration and the needs of this congregation demanded a separate unit and in 1917 the *Sacra Congregatio pro Ecclesia Orientali* was solemnly established. At present this Congregation deals with the affairs of the Oriental Churches.

At the same time some of the solemn pronouncements of Vatican II are encouraging and promising, and will, it is hoped, narrow down the gap that exists between the East and the West. In the Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* the right of the Eastern Churches to have their own government<sup>34</sup> is admitted in principle. Moreover, in the same decree there seems to be a decision to re-establish the rights and privileges of the Patriarchs.<sup>35</sup>

Some of the Eastern Churches which had direct and closer relations with Rome have almost lost their identity as a result of the strong latinizing policy followed by the westerners. Their liturgy, spiritual heritage, theology, discipline and even their spiritual practices are being westernized. This was an unopposed process in the last few

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34. *Decree on the Oriental Churches* of Vat. II, art. 5.

35. *Ibidem* art. 9.

centuries! There are those who see the promulgation of the **Oriental Canon Law** in this light.

The history of the ancient Eastern Church in India is a typical example in this connexion. This Church was deeply rooted in the Indian cultural soil and had a particular administrative system with active participation of the laity. These Christians known as the Thomas Christians were 'Hindu in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in worship'.<sup>36</sup> They called their traditions the "Law of Thomas the Apostle" as he was the founder of their Church.<sup>37</sup> But with the coming of the missionaries from the West there began a constant attempt to suppress the Eastern traditions and adapt them to western practices. The Portuguese succeeded in influencing Rome, and their Padroado was extended over these Christians. Bishops of the Latin rite were appointed to govern these Oriental Christians, and did so from 1599 to 1896, a long period of nearly three centuries. Their lawful resistance to preserve their own ancient traditions was branded as schism and lack of loyalty! The ancient Christian community in India, which was of the same rite and faith till the coming of the foreign missionaries, was split into different denominations during the three hundred years of Latin rule! Though the indigenous hierarchy was partly restored a few decades ago the re-establishment of the Eastern identity is by no means an easy process. There is a clamour for indianization at present even on the part of foreign missionaries, but many do not seem to realize that there once existed an ancient Eastern Church which was disfigured by Western influences at the time of colonization.

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36. Placid J. Podipara, 'Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, and Oriental in Worship', *Ostkirchliche Studien*, Wurzburg, 1959, pp. 89-104.

37. The sum total of their doctrine, discipline and traditions was called the Law of Thomas, as they were deeply aware of the apostolicity of their Church.



## Conclusion

Our brief study has shown at least some of the main sources or forces which have influenced the structural evolution of the Church. They reveal how the structures of the Church are linked with some of the concrete situations of the past. At present when the whole Church is aware of the need for revival and renewal she has to re-examine her own structures and distinguish the essential from the accessory. This distinction is inevitable especially in the light of the new Pentecostal atmosphere of ecumenical experience, after the Second Vatican Council. The ancient Churches of the East as well as the Protestant Churches of the West would not accept many of the organizational developments and administrative structures of the Roman Church which do not belong to the divine heritage of the Church! On account of unilateral development according to Western traditions, the Church remains too western in liturgy, theology, discipline and even spiritual outlook. A highly centralized administration and a juridical structure given shape after the separation of the Easterners remain insurmountable obstacles for the Churches of the East. The local Churches, especially the Eastern ones, do not want to be absorbed into a mighty organization which in practice cannot leave them any room to preserve their identity or individuality! The experience of the past is eloquent enough, and the history of the Church in India is not lacking in evidences in this matter.

At the same time, the growing awareness of human and Christian solidarity rejects sectarianism and exclusivism. The Church of Christ has a very vital part to play as a unifying force of the world. She will succeed in her mission only when she becomes truly Catholic, and ready to accept the principle of unity in diversity. Unity is profound while uniformity is superficial. The study of the local Churches should enable us to understand and appreciate unity in the essentials and rich diversity in everything else. Our historical studies will reveal some of the high-handed attempts, in the past, at uniformity which once divided and still disfigures the Church of Christ.

The structural evolution should not be a deviation. A constant return to the source is necessary if we are to remain faithful to the Church of the Apostles. Christ is the real source of inspiration and tower of strength. He has shown us the true concept of the Church and the nature of authority to be exercised in it. But when the religion is made a mask in the struggle for sheer power and domination it becomes inhuman and unchristian. In the place of claims for power and privileges the spirit of true Christian humility and service should be established. The Church should not be reduced to a mere organization to be supervised by superiors! The local Churches alone can remedy this situation by making the Church their own and at the same time rising above the narrow limits of sectarianism. Thus the Church on her march to the Lord of creation should remain the leaven and the unifying force of all mankind.

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# The Local Church is the Catholic Church

## Consequences of Decentralization in the Church

The tension between the local church and the universal church is as old as Christianity, as is clear from the rumblings and grumblings in the church of the Apostles in Jerusalem, when it began to spread beyond the original narrow confines: the universal spiritual mission of the Apostles as opposed to the actual needs of the ministry of the local community. This tension is bound to arise whenever emphasis shifts between universal and local dimensions. It is very evident in present-day thought when attention is directed from an exaggerated view of universality to the long neglected area of the actual problems of the local church. This not only implies a shift in theological emphasis but also brings into focus the organic constitution of the Church, the relative and interdependent roles of the Bishops and the other members of the community, and the actual mission of the Church with the priorities to be kept in view, in its activities.

### 1. The Eucharistic Ecclesiology.

The Church has been often presented as an arbitrarily constituted juridical body instituted by Christ and provided with authority to organize, teach and sanctify men.<sup>1</sup> In sharp contrast to this image the documents of Vatican II have emphasised a view of the church as the mystical reality emerging from the side of the Second Adam sleeping on the Cross,

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1. Cf. Burkhard Neunheuser OSB, "Eglise Universelle et Eglise Local" *L'Eglise de Vatican II*, tome II, Paris: Les Editions du Cerg, 1967, pp. 607-638.

the Eucharistic community nourished by the body and blood of Christ.<sup>2</sup> It is not an artificial entity but naturally arose from the redemptive event of Christ's self-sacrifice for humanity, as the community of the disciples gathered around the table of His last supper, intimately participating in his suffering, death and resurrection. This view is not anything new, but the most ancient teaching of the Fathers, and has been the predominant notion of the Church in the Oriental tradition down the centuries.<sup>3</sup>

In this theological perspective the local church is the catholic church, in as much as it contains in itself everything necessary for its life, namely the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Sacraments for the sanctification of its members.<sup>4</sup> Here "catholic" is not taken merely in the external and extensive sense of embracing all men in all places, but rather in the internal and intensive sense: it subsumes everything in the life of man into the plan of salvation: nothing is left out. Only in and through this all-embracing catholic local Church does one enter and participate in the life of the universal Church. The external organization of the Church both local and universal is meant to help the faithful share effectively in the

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2. Cf. *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, ed. by Y. Congar, H. Kung, and D. O'Hanlon, pp. 27-40.

3. Cf. N. Afanassiev, "The Church which Presides in Love" in the collection *The Primacy of Peter*, London, 1963 pp. 57-110. Afanassiev is one who placed great stress on the Church as the Eucharistic community in recent times. Among his numerous articles on this topic cf. "The Canons of the Church: Changeable or Unchangeable?", *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 11 (1967) and several articles in *Irenikon* 35 (1962) 65-75; 316-339; 36 (1963) 436-475; F. Dvornik, "National Churches and the Church Universal", *The Eastern Churches Quarterly*, 5 (1943) 172-219 traces the whole historical development of the Ecclesial concept. D. E. Lanne, "L'Elise locale et l'Eglise universelle" *Irenikon* 43 (1970) 481-511.

4. Gasiano Floristan, *The Parish: Eucharistic Community*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1967, pp. 79-83.



spiritual reality constituted by the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist. The Sacraments, in a sense, constitute the essential dimension of the Christian Community.<sup>5</sup>

### The Organism of the Local Church

It is only a truism to say that the Church is the whole community and not merely the hierarchy. The life and activities of the laymen belong to the reality of the Church just as much as the jurisdictional activity of the Bishop. The Bishop is not a governor sent from outside to rule the community, but belongs to the community itself as member, coordinating centre, leader and spokesman. In this way the interdependence between the Bishop and the community becomes more evident in the local Church than in the universal Church. The local community and its members need the guidance and leadership of their head, while the leader cannot function without the support and cooperation of the members of the community.

Hence one of the first consequences of decentralization of authority and functions in the Church is the active and leading role of the ordinary Christian layman in sanctifying the world. The local church in close contact with the actual problems of the people realizes that the message of Christ cannot be effectively announced in a vacuum. She knows that she must involve herself in the socio-political and economic problems that deeply affect the life of the people. Here the Bishop and the clergy do not have the competence to find out adequate solutions nor the authority to put them into effect. Here it becomes evident that the Church is not fundamentally a clerical institution. The layman has the right and obligation to give flesh and blood to the redemptive mystery in the areas of his competence, in close collaboration with every member of the Church including the clergy. On the other hand the clergy cannot completely isolate themselves from the socio-political and economic fields; only by gaining

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5. Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, London: Burns & Oates, 1964, pp. 20-23.

sufficient competence in these fields can they make the spiritual message itself relevant.<sup>6</sup>

## The Local Church and the Universal Church

An evident danger in placing emphasis on the local Church is that of creating a closed local community and forgetting the universality of the Church. Hence there is need to affirm that the local church is:

‘catholic’ only to the extent that it represents and actualizes the universal Church. As the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of Vatican II clearly states the liturgical services performed in the local Church “are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the ‘Sacrament of unity’” and as such “pertain to the whole body of the Church.”<sup>7</sup>

The fully constituted local Church is the liturgical assembly presided over by the Bishop.<sup>8</sup> Since the Bishop cannot preside at every liturgical celebration in every part of the diocese, “parishes set up locally under a pastor who takes the place of the Bishop” are very important. Even in this small local community there is the universal Church through the bonds of charity to the Bishop, to the church of the entire region and to the universal Church.<sup>9</sup> This openness to the universal Church in faith and communion is an essential factor in the constitution of the local Church.

## Local Church and Ecumenism

The view of the Church as the eucharistic community gathered together in a particular place changes the perspective regarding ecumenical activities. On the one hand divisions among those worshipping the same true God appear totally

6. Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 43.

7. Vatican II, *Constitution on the Liturgy*, n. 26.

8. Ibid. n. 42.

9. Ibid.

anomalous when they live together in a particular locality. Hence there is a pressing urgency for all to unite into a single Church with one faith, one Lord and one worship. On the other hand certain modes of ecumenical activity used as means of achieving the unity of Churches become highly objectionable in the context of the local Church. Participation in Liturgical services is one of them. In reality eucharistic unity is the culmination and final expression of unity in faith and worship. Hence participation in liturgical worship cannot be permitted unless there be unity in faith.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand once unity in liturgical worship has been actually established, there is very little meaning in speaking about "separated" brethren or "separated" churches. This is why the Oriental Churches in general, which consider eucharistic community as the essential dimension of the Church are very reluctant to permit communion in sacred services when unity in faith and hierarchy has not been clearly established. The immediate result of heresy or disagreement in matters of faith was excommunication, namely exclusion from the eucharistic community. There is no meaning in a group of people sharing in the same spiritual banquet when they are spiritually divided by heresy. It would be a lie since it would symbolize a spiritual unity that actually did not exist. In the context of the universal Church, with socio-political considerations dominating public attention, this anomaly may not be quite evident. But in the intimate community of the local church it is too glaring to be ignored.

### The Local Church and the Secular Mission

The most important consequence of decentralization of authority in the Church is the bringing of the secular mission of the Church into the foreground. As the Church of the

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10. Cf D. E. Lanne, "L'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle" *Irenikon*, 43 (1970) 506-508. Ecumenism is not a mere manifestation of unity, but creating the unity. Cf. G. Thils, *Histoire doctrinale du Mouvement oecumenique*, Paris - Louvain, 1963 p. 170.

Word-made-flesh the Christian Eucharistic community has the fundamental task of incarnating Christ's message of salvation in concrete situations of time and place. This can be accomplished only if the redemptive mystery is made available to individual persons and in individual situations. These constitute the local churches. The actual problems are not generally universal but often peculiar to individual places and regions. Unless the local churches concentrate their attention on individual persons, their particular situations and special problems, the "catholic" Church will be failing in her universal mission itself.

Vatican II was fully aware of this concrete universality of the Church as expressed in the local Church:

In any community existing around an altar, under the sacred ministry of the bishop, there is manifested a symbol of that charity and 'unity of the Mystical Body, without which there can be no salvation'. In these communities though frequently small and poor, or living far from any other, Christ is present. By virtue of him the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church gathers together.<sup>11</sup>

The Church is not an impersonal institution, but the community of the People of God deeply concerned about every member and about the whole community. This concern includes not only the internal sanctification of each member but also actual human problems like poverty, social disabilities, sickness and war, which in one way or another affect individual and common well-being. The Church is a sacramental sign proclaiming salvation to the whole man. Her concern for the whole man must be externally also visible. A Church which ignores the hunger of the masses, condones any kind of exploitation, and washes her hands of socio-political problems is evidently no sacramental sign of anything deeper.

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11. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 26.



Only when the Church becomes incarnate in the more basic communities of the family and the village, does she come close enough to the problems of actuality.

### Local Church and Change

Looked at from the angle of universality the Church presents a certain immutability. But actually the Church is the pilgrim community that constantly listens to the word of God, carefully reads the Will of God in the signs of the times and adjusts its course accordingly. This implies a constant readiness on the part of the Church to adapt herself to changing situations. A triumphalist attitude that refuses to accommodate any change whatever in the life and attitude of Christians is a blatant denial of this pilgrim aspect of the Church.

This change is called for most frequently in the sphere of the local Church. On the plane of the universal Church a certain amount of basic uniformity, order, discipline and stability is the hall mark of unity. But on the level of the local Church uniformity can mean stagnation and sterility; any attempt to press all individuals into a common mould will crush all originality and destroy all unity as well. Every departure from an established order of things need not necessarily be destructive of peace and harmony. On the contrary certain established orders owing to their inherent injustice to certain individuals and sections of people can in reality be more violent than the most bloody revolutions. So where change is called for, the living local Church should give leadership in healthy change.

This readiness to adopt and accommodate changes required by local conditions and situations introduces a certain humility in the attitude of the Church to its task in the world. Though she is the minister of God's revelation to the nations she has no monopoly of truth and salvation. God is the only author of salvation and the Church is carrying out this saving activity of God in a truly human way. In this work she has to cooperate with every agency for good and humbly seek grace and truth in the silent working of divine providence in the lives of men. This humble search for truth and life in the

history of persons and groups should be clearly manifest in the life of the local Church. Any arrogance or attempt at dominating persons and groups will only destroy the image of the humble Servant of the Lord that the Church has to bear about herself.

## Conclusion

Thus on the whole a natural consequence of the decentralization of authority and functions in the Church will be the danger of a certain lowering of the image of universality and catholicity of the Church. There will be also a certain danger of nationalism and parochialism dividing up the Christian community into small local groups. But these are dangers that have to be carefully avoided, and they can be avoided if the true image of the local Church as the concrete universal Church is strongly emphasised. On the other hand an emphasis on the local Church will bring out clearly certain fundamental dimensions of the Church which have been obscured in recent times owing to a triumphalist presentation of the Church and an interpretation of catholicity which bordered on imperialism. These basic dimensions are: the Church is the Eucharistic community gathered around the table of the Lord. She is a pilgrim in this world never intending to build up a kingdom of this world, but constantly having in view the Kingdom of God which is already here in this world. She is constantly in dialogue with the world and its groups, but her aim is to bring all to the fullness of love and sharing in the Eucharistic Banquet. Her principal task is to present the message of salvation in the concrete situations of everyday life. For this reason she has to be involved in the actual problems of the people, without however becoming attached to any particular situation or particular group. In this way the Church with her universal mission becomes incarnate in the local Church: the local Church is the Catholic Church.

# Christian Freedom and the Local Churches

To a great number of our contemporaries, the expression 'Christian Freedom' may sound strange and even contradictory. For them, Christianity would be enemy number one of freedom, because, according to them, Christianity depreciates life and its instincts. It puts restraint on the spontaneous development and activity of human tendencies. It condemns violence and vigour; humbles the exalted ones and exalts the humble. In short, it shuts man up in mediocrity, without allowing the full growth of the individual in all his dimensions.

Even believers at times remain puzzled at the notion of Christian Freedom, which according to them, is so difficult to make compatible with the hierarchical structure of the Church, which teaches, commands and governs. If freedom implies spontaneous movement and initiative, how is it compatible with obedience in the Church?

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Gospel, the faith of Christians and the Church as the Community of all believers are, according to the New Testament, not factors which prevent, minimize or suppress freedom, but on the contrary, effective guarantees of freedom, and its ultimate safeguard and foundation. If the Gospel and faith were to disappear from society, freedom would be fundamentally endangered.<sup>1</sup> Hence the most intimate nature of the Church, her whole meaning and purpose, is freedom, the glorious freedom of the Children

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1. Cf. J. Blank, *Das Evangelium als Garantie der Freiheit*, Würzburg, 1970, p. 35.

of God.<sup>2</sup> In her inner nature she is, despite all external signs to the contrary, the dwelling place of freedom. Our task in this article is to examine the New Testament Concept of this Christian Freedom in the Church.

### Freedom: A Self-Determination

The opponents of Christianity, who accuse the Church of being the destroyer of freedom, often define it as 'self assertion' or 'self-determination'.<sup>3</sup> The New Testament notion of freedom agrees perfectly with this. It is on the question of the 'self' to be asserted or determined that the New Testament gives certain specifications. 'To be oneself' means 'to respond to one's call'. It is to give a personal response to the call that is addressed to one personally by God. It is to realize the fundamental plan of God for man.

Now, what is this call or plan of God for man? Eph. 1: 4-5 gives the answer: "...he (the Father) chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his children through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will." So 'to be really oneself' or 'to be free', is to become a child of God and to be able to say the filial 'Yes' to the call of God. Man, left to himself, is incapable of it in his sinful condition. He needs the redemptive mediation of Christ, who alone is the 'Son of God' *par excellence*.

So it is in Jesus Christ that one has to search for the filial freedom that is exercised in its full splendour and perfection. The freedom of man will appear then as a

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2. On Christian Freedom, see J. Cambier, "La liberté Chrétienne selon Saint Paul", *Studia Evangelica* II (Berlin, 1964), pp. 315-53; K. Niederwimmer, *Der Begriff der Freiheit im Neuen Testament*, Berlin 1966; E. Käsemann, *Der Ruf der Freiheit*, Tübingen 1968.

3. Cf. N. Decrock, "La Liberté Chrétienne," *Assemblées du Seigneur* 11 (1961), pp. 79-82.



participation in his freedom. That is why we read in Jn 3:36: "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

### The Sovereign Freedom of the Son

The tranquillity of conduct, the spontaneity of reactions, the self-possession without rigidity, the firmness without stiffness, the power united with kindness, all point to the sovereign freedom in Jesus. What is the source of this perfect and royal freedom? The only answer is: his filial life, his filial love. If Jesus was always and everywhere fully himself it is because he fully recognised, accepted and wanted his sonship.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus lived in such an intimacy with the Father that the name of the Father ceaselessly flowed from his lips. The very first words of Jesus recorded in the Bible concern the Father: "I should be about my Father's business" (Lk 2: 49). The last words are: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23: 46). Similar words run throughout his whole life. "My food is to do the will of my Father" (Jn 4: 34). "He who does the will of my Father in heaven, is my brother, sister and mother" (Mt 12: 50). Whatever he says, whatever he does and whatever he is, he always makes reference to the Father. He was a living reference to the Father, so much so that he could say to Philip: "He who has seen me, has seen the Father" (Jn 14: 9). His quality as 'Son' unified all the forces of his personality. And it is this that explains the supreme freedom of Jesus.

The very life of Jesus on earth, loving the Father and giving his life as redemption for many, was the expression of his filial life. Giving up his life for the redemption of man, he did the will of the Father and thus manifested his love towards the Father, his filial life. In the last analysis, redemption of man means a re-integration of him in this filial love, in this filial life, in this life of freedom.

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4. Cf. N. Decrock, *op. cit.* p. 83.

If Jesus really lived his sonship, in constant fidelity to the Father, it is because he was moved by the Holy Spirit, inhabited by the Spirit of Sonship. In all his actions, in joy and sorrow, in success as well as in difficulty, at the core of his being, it was the Spirit that was working, and creating the most filial receptivity.

### **Life of Christian Freedom: Life of Christian Sonship**

From the above analysis we deduce the following conclusions. 'To be free' is 'to be oneself', is 'to respond to one's call'. This call comes from God the Father and invites us to a filial life. It is in the measure in which one leads a life of christian sonship, that one enjoys Christian freedom. This sonship, and freedom is obtainable through the sole mediation of Jesus Christ, because Jesus is the unique Son of God and freedom is only his by right.<sup>5</sup> Hence the means of obtaining Christian sonship and freedom is to make oneself conform to Jesus Christ through incorporation with him.

### **Christian Freedom: A Liberation**

On the other hand, the Christian freedom in the New Testament is spoken of in terms of a liberation. The word used to express this idea in the New Testament is *chuteria*, and it refers to a condition opposite to slavery.<sup>6</sup> It is used in the New Testament concretely for liberation from sin (Rom 6: 18-23; Jn 8: 31-36), from the law (Rom 7: 3f; 8: 2; Gal 2: 4; 4: 21-31; 5: 1, 13) and from death (Rom 6: 21f; 8: 21). So freedom is liberation from an existence in sin which leads through the law to death. An existence in sin is one which is subject to sin (Rom 6: 20; Jn 8: 34). It is a surrender to the craving of the flesh, to the concupiscent

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5. Cf. B. Vawter, "The Gospel according to John," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London 1968, p. 442.

6. Cf. W. F. Arndt & F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago 1956 pp. 249-50.

hunger of self-centred earthly and carnal life. This craving or hunger is unleashed by the law. In itself the law is the holy, righteous and good will of God (Rom 7:12). It is appointed for life (Rom 7:10), which consists in living for others in love (Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14). But in the existence of man, dominated by sin, by the self-will of being, the law becomes a burden of external constraint, of obligation, and it brings out the sin of existence in experience: "If it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin" (Rom 7:7f). A self-seeking existence in sin leads finally to death, because it is referred to itself and not to God and to life, having separated itself from God and therefore from life. So freedom has to be a liberation from sin, the law and death.

How is this liberation obtained? The primary answer is 'through the act of Jesus Christ': "To freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1). As may be seen from the parallel passages in Gal 3:13 and 4:4, the reference is to the event of the life of Christ offered up in vicarious death, in obedience to the will of God. Our freedom, then, is the event of a historical life unreservedly sacrificed for others<sup>7</sup>. It is the Son who set us free (Jn 8:36) realizing his divine sonship in self-sacrifice for the redemption of man. So it is an integration of our lives in that filial life of Christ that gives us freedom from sin, the law and death. This is the call that comes to man in the Gospel, the call to freedom,<sup>8</sup> the call to divine sonship.

Freedom is realized in some way, namely, through liberation from slavery we are given the *gift* of freedom. But it remains also a *call*, namely, we are asked not to submit again to slavery, and this presupposes the possibility of falling back into the condition of non-freedom<sup>9</sup>. Hence our

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7. Cf. H. Schlier, art. "Eleuteria", *TDNT* II, p. 498.

8. Cf. Gal. 5:13 "For you are called to freedom".

9. Cf. Gal. 5:1 "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery."

freedom is to be realized gradually and progressively, through the integration of our lives with the filial life of Christ.

Speaking of liberation from the slavery of the law to the free condition of the children of God, St Paul describes the law making use of several images such as: the pedagogue leading to Christ (Gal 3:24), tutor leading to maturity (Gal 4:1-2), Hagar in opposition to Sara (Gal 4:21 - 31). This is because slavery under the law makes man feel the need of being liberated and disposes him to welcome the One who is to liberate him. Consequently the law becomes an instrument leading to Christ, who is the liberator.

Liberation from the slavery of sin, the law and death means adoption as children of God. That is why St Paul presents the event of salvation in three distinct phases: slavery under the law (Gal 4:1-3), the redemptive mission of Christ (Gal 4:4) and the filial adoption of the believers (Gal 4:5-7).

Now, this liberation from slavery and filial adoption takes place, as we said, through incorporation with Christ. This is very well expressed in the Epistle to the Galatians 3:25-28: "But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is no longer Jew nor Greek...; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." To see better the meaning of the passage, we put it in its structural form:-

- v. 25 Now that faith has come
- a We are *no longer* under a custodian
- v. 26 *For you are all* Children of God *in Christ Jesus* through faith
- b v. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ
- a<sup>1</sup> v. 28 There is *no longer* Jew nor Greek...  
*For you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Note the different parallel statements in a and a<sup>1</sup>. We are no longer under the slavery of the law because we are children of



God. Our 'being children of God' is parallel to our 'being One in Christ Jesus' (a<sup>1</sup>). So it is our union or incorporation with Christ that makes us children of God and thus delivers us from slavery to freedom. The phrase 'in Christ Jesus' also refers to this intimate union with Christ. Versicle 27 gives the explanation of this sonship in Christ (v. 26) and union with Christ (v. 28).<sup>10</sup> The explanation is that you have 'put on Christ'. So the 'being children of God' and 'being One in Christ' take place concretely in 'putting on Christ'. If they take place formally 'in putting on Christ', materially they take place in baptism, because it is those who are baptized that have put on Christ.

What does 'to put on a person' mean? In the Old Testament, it has a metaphorical sense of identification with a thing or person. There we have phrases such as 'put on strength' (Is 51:9; 52:1), 'put on righteousness' (59:17), etc. In St Paul the phrase occurs twelve times in all and always in this metaphorical sense.<sup>11</sup> Out of these, it is used eight times of a thing and four times of a person. The texts, speaking of a person, are Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:24 and Col 3:10. The first two speak of putting on Christ, while the other two speak of putting on the new man. And it is interesting to note that all these texts come in contexts that are exhortatory. They all remind the faithful of their union with Christ and urge them to a renewal of life. Rom 13:14 which is the only other text in Paul speaking of 'putting on Christ', shows a subjective and radical process of life in the Christian, that began in baptism. Rom 6:3-11 in which v. 3 is parallel to Gal 3:27, both speaking of baptism, shows that 'the baptism in Christ' results in a change of life, a change into a new life in Christ (cf. vv. 4 and 10). All these passages show that the 'putting on Christ' means a union with Christ through faith. This results in a new life of faith which makes man, so to say, identical with Christ, or in short, another Christ. But this is a long process which only

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10. Note the particle *gar* (for) with which v. 27 begins.

11. Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, SJ, The letter to the Galatians, in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 243.

begins in baptism. It is this process of putting on Christ (the life of faith) that gives liberation from the law, sin and death and hence the Christian freedom, of which Baptism marks the beginning. This is what the words of Jesus mean when he says: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:31-32).

### **Holy Spirit - The Principle of this Sonship and Freedom**

Speaking of the sovereign sonship and freedom of Christ, we saw how Jesus really lived his sonship and freedom, because he was moved by the Holy Spirit and inhabited by the Spirit of Sonship. The same is true of the Christian. It is the same Holy Spirit that is the principle of the Christian sonship and freedom. St Paul says in Rom 8:14: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." In v. 9 of the same Chapter he says: "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ, does not belong to Christ." So it is the Spirit of Christ that should effect the union or incorporation with Christ and the consequent sonship and freedom.

But again this is not mechanical. We are not dead instruments under the movement of the Holy Spirit. We have an active role in the working of the Spirit. This is indicated in the different statements regarding the Spirit in connection with the sonship. If in the Epistle to the Galatians, *God* sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts (4:6), in the Epistle to the Romans *we* have received the Spirit of sonship (8:15). If in Galatians *the Spirit* cries 'Abba, Father' (4:6), in Romans *we* cry 'Abba Father' in the Spirit which we have received (8:15). The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God (Rom 8:16). Hence there is an intimate relation between the activity of the Spirit and our activity as children under the influence of the Spirit.

Christian freedom, therefore, is initially the life of Christ in us in its germinal stage. It is the baptismal grace, germinal, weak but dynamic, threatened by opposite powers but endowed with a capacity for growth and expansion. This germinal free-

dom will develop into full maturity in the measure in which the life of Christ grows in us through a constant and united effort of our spirit with the Spirit of Christ. As we grow in freedom, we will also gradually obtain a complete and perfect liberation from the law, sin and death. This is a long process demanding constant and strenuous effort.

### Christian Freedom and the Law of the Spirit

If Christian freedom is a complete liberation from the law, we meet with the problem: Is the Christian under no law? Already the Apostle saw this problem: "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under the law but under grace?" (Rom 6:15). He says: "By no means!" and then later gives the positive answer in Rom 8:2: "For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ has set me free from the law of sin and death." So it is the Law of the Spirit that gives the Christian freedom. This Law of the Spirit cannot be a Law from which one is liberated. Hence it is not an external law imposed from outside, without the accompanying power to fulfil it. It is an internal source of activity. It is called the 'Law' in OT language when the establishment of the New Covenant is spoken of. Jer 31:33 says; "This is the Covenant which I will make.... I will put *my law* within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Ez 36:27 says: "I will put *my Spirit* within you and cause you to walk in my statutes...." So through the Spirit, the internal source of activity, the justice of the Law is fulfilled in us. So it is not a kind of libertinage. To follow a wayward life, is a worse kind of slavery than that from which one is liberated. Hence the exhortations of the Apostle in his Epistle to the Galatians: "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh" (5:13). "Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh" (5:16). Liberation from the Law is a kind of replacement of it by the inner Law of the Spirit.

## Freedom in Tension

Liberation from the law by its replacement by the inner law of the Spirit does not mean absence of fight between the Spirit and the flesh. For as St Paul says: "The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other..." (Gal 5:17). If the victory of the Spirit over the flesh is not acquired, where is, then, the liberation? The liberation is in the power to fight and in the certainty of victory, if this power is used as it should be.

The true Christian becomes conscious of it and carries on the fight courageously, knowing for certain that it will accomplish in him the new life of Christ, the genuine freedom of the children of God.

## Life of Freedom — Life of Love and Service

Growth in this life of the Spirit, this life of freedom, is known by its fruits. In Gal 5: 22-23, the apostle enumerated them as: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. It is worth noting that these are spoken of, in the singular, as the 'fruit' of the Spirit and the first one mentioned is 'love'. Already in Gal 5: 6, speaking of the core of life in Christ, Paul describes it as a life of faith working through love. So 'love' or 'charity' is the first fruit or the fruit *par excellence* of the life of Christian freedom. All the other fruits are consequent to it. The law of the Spirit, the law of 'love', liberates us from all external laws, making us accomplish the justice of all the laws.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the New Testament concept of freedom should be thought of not in a purely individual sense, but in a social and ecclesiological context.<sup>13</sup> Liberated

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12. Cf. Gal. 5:14 "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself'".

13. Cf. R. Pesch, "The New Testament Foundations of a Democratic form of life in the Church," *Concilium*, March 1971, p. 50.



from the slavery of the law the Christian goes out of himself—his egoistic self and is opened to God and his fellow beings. It is not in isolation, but in a life with others that the Christian attains freedom.<sup>14</sup> His share of his Father's (God) nature makes him share also his Father's love for the rest of the family and he becomes a true child of the Father ready to spend and to be spent for all the members of the family. This is why St Paul says in Gal 5:13 "You were called to freedom.... through love; be servants of one another."

### Christian Freedom in the Church

As we saw above, this freedom is the result of man's incorporation into Christ, which initially takes place in baptism and develops into full growth through a life of faith in the Church. This means that true freedom can be obtained only in the Church, and the Church is really the dwelling—place of true freedom.

But, since the Church is the community of those who have to work out their freedom by winning the fight between the flesh and the Spirit, it is in the Church too that this freedom has always to be won. The realization of freedom in the Church is, therefore, a task of decisive importance, and a difficult one at that. There is always the danger that the very same institutions which, according to their nature, are meant to serve the freedom of the children of God, can be misused, against their nature, to bring about servitude. The cases of some scientists, philosophers and theologians in the Church, who were brought into the most severe conflicts of conscience, were perhaps the result of some institutions of the Church going beyond the limit set to them by the freedom of all the children of God. Today, more than ever before, when so many flee from the Church, the home of freedom, to seek freedom elsewhere, the Church has to shine forth as the dwelling-place of freedom through her institutions and constitutions, ministries and ordinances. Talking, preaching and theologizing about Christian freedom will be of no avail

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14. Cf. H. Schlier, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

if there is no life of true Christian freedom in the Church. The Church has to testify to the truth of the freedom that has been given to her, and she can only do this in her form of life.<sup>15</sup>

For this purpose the essentially charismatic structure of the Church should be taken into account. All the members of the Church are given *charismata*<sup>16</sup> that are different, for the building up of the Church. *Charisma* could be defined as 'God's call to the individual person in view of a specific service within the community, including the ability to perform this service.'<sup>17</sup> It is the full exercise of these *charismata* of all the members of the Church that can bring about Christian freedom in the Church. This is possible only when the hierarchic structure of the Church goes in harmony with the charismatic structure of the Church.<sup>18</sup>

### Freedom under Authority

However, it must not be an illusion of freedom, but true freedom that is realized in the Church. As we saw above libertinage, or the possibility of doing just whatever one fancies, is not true freedom. The condition of the man who hands himself over to all the fancies of his lust and passions,

15. Cf. R. Pesch, art. cit., p. 51.

16. Cf. 1 Cor 12:7 "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

17. Cf. H. Küng, "The Charismatic Structure of the Church" *Concilium*, 4, 1 (1965), p. 31. Here it may be noted that the genuinity of the *charisma* of those who leave the Church is to be questioned, since the *charisma* is given in view of a service within the Community.

18. Note the words of Cardinal Suenens in the Council: "What is to be completely avoided is the impression that the hierarchical structure of the Church appear as an administrative apparatus with no intimate connection with the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are spread throughout the life of the Church." Cf. *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, ed. by Y. Congar, H. Küng and D. O'Harlon, London, 1964, pp. 13-21.

to all the spirits and movements of the age, is merely another form of slavery. Only when individuals exercise their *charismata* guided by the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ (Rom 8: 2) in the Church, do we have real Christian freedom. So the Church should have a form, a ministry, an authority and an order, which allow the free exercise of the Law of the Spirit. We see St Paul himself, the great apostle of freedom, in his letters to the Community of Corinth rejecting disorderly enthusiasm and asserting his authority.<sup>19</sup> In 2 Cor 10: 8 he speaks of his authority which the Lord gave him to build up the community. So the Christian freedom in the Church is a 'freedom in order.' Anyone, who, through dictatorship and terror, destroys freedom in the Church, also destroys true order and authority in the Church. And anyone who, through rebellion and revolt, destroys order and authority in the Church, also destroys true freedom in the Church.<sup>20</sup>

The vertical relationship of command-obedience in the Church needs to be supplemented by the horizontal relationship of dialogue between authority and the free Christian Community.<sup>21</sup> Authority is to be and to do what God himself, through Christ and in the Spirit, is and does. He gathers, unites and establishes communion. He does this by initiating and sustaining with men the 'dialogue of salvation'. Authority should do the same through dialogue with the charismatic body of the faithful. Freedom, on the other hand, should correspond to it, participating in the dialogue of salvation, united to authority in a ministry of love towards the Community, because freedom in its profound nature is a call to love.<sup>22</sup>

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19. Cf. 1 Cor 4:21; 5:7; etc.

20. Cf. H. Küng, "The Freedom of the Church," *Free dom Today* (trans. by Cecily Hastings), N. Y. 1966, p. 50.

21. Cf. W. J. Burghardt, SJ, "The Authority - Freedom issue: Destructive or Creative?", *Spiritua! Life*, Winter, 1969, p. 233.

22. Cf J. C. Murray, "Freedom, Authority, Community", *America*, 115 (1966), pp. 734-741.

## Freedom in the Local Churches

Christian freedom, which is to be won in the Church, should be lived and manifested precisely on the level of the local Churches. It would be quite wrong to wait until institutions live out and manifest these principles of freedom at a universal level. However important these principles may be, and however much deserving of serious attention, it is even more important, to begin with them at the local level of the Church. The local Community is the starting-point for a real implementation of the principles of Christian freedom.

Even in Paul's time, Christian freedom had this local ecclesiological application. Paul argued energetically for the free life of the Church, for freedom as lived by the individual Community. He fought against the traditionalist legalism of the Judeo-Christians, who wanted to impose on the Gentile Christians their legal prescriptions from the Mosaic Law (Gal ch. 2). Actually it is in this historical context that he gives his teaching on Christian freedom in his Epistle to the Galatians.

According to the New Testament, the Church takes place above all in the individual Church Community,<sup>23</sup> such as the Church of Jerusalem (Acts 11: 22; 12: 15; 15: 4), of Antioch (Acts 11: 26; 13: 1; 14: 27), of Caesarea (Acts 18: 22) or Ephesus (Acts 20: 17, 28). The distinctiveness of the New Testament concept of the Church comes out in these verses of Acts. It must be emphasized that the Christian Community in different places is simply called the 'Church' without any specific correlation. The individual Church Community is, therefore, a making present and real of the Church as such.<sup>24</sup> It must also be noted that the singular and plural are used promiscuously. It is not that 'the Church' divides up into 'Churches', nor does the sum of the 'Churches'

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23. Cf. N. Greinacher, "A Community Free of Rule," *Concilium*, March 1971, p. 88.

24. Cf. W. Kasper, "Kirche und Gemeinde", *Der Seelsorger*, 38 (1968), p. 389.



produce 'the Church'. The one Church is present in the places mentioned, nor is this affected by the mention of the Churches alongside one another.<sup>25</sup>

Another important point is that the same word is used for the Jewish Christian Community at Jerusalem and the Gentile Christian Community at Antioch. We never find ornamental epithets. The only attribute, if we may call it so, is the genitive 'of God', and it is added both to the singular<sup>26</sup> and to the plural.<sup>27</sup> This is of more importance than might appear. This means that the usual distinction that we make between the Universal Church as the 'Church of God' and the local Churches simply as part of it, is not quite biblical. Each Community, each local Church, however small, represents the total Community or the Church.<sup>28</sup> This is supported by the expression *thē ekklesīa.... thē ousē en Korinthō* in I Cor 1: 2 and 2 Cor 1: 1. The true rendering is not 'the Corinthian Church' which would stand side by side with the Roman Church, but 'the Church as it is in Corinth'. It is worth noting that Paul, in his Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians, speaking of the Church as the body of Christ refers precisely to the local Community either of Corinth (1 Cor 10: 16 f; 12: 12-27) or of Rome (Rom 12: 4 f).<sup>29</sup>

Vatican II has not given us any collected teaching on the theology of the local Church. But there are elements in the various documents of the Council, which show that in the theology of the Church, the local Church has become very

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25. Note that in his letter to the Romans, St Paul uses *ekklesia* only in Ch. 16 and always in the sense of a local Church.

26. Cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; Gal. 1:13.

27. Cf. 1 Cor 11:16; 1 Thes 2:14.

28. Cf. G. Baum, "The Ecclesial Reality of the Other Churches," *Concilium*, 4, 1 (1965) pp. 41 - 44.

29. Cf. H. Küng, *The Church*, (trans. by Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden), N. Y. 1967, p. 227.

much the centre of reference of the Church's life and manifestation.<sup>30</sup>

### Pluralism in Unity: Expression of Freedom

The second Vatican Council has once more, in a new way, taken real account of the necessary multiplicity of the individual Churches. 'Unity', and not 'uniformity', is what is called for in the Church of God.

Pluralism in unity is something that runs through the history of salvation down to the coming of the Saviour. In the Old Testament the call to Abraham was given to make of him a great people, so that through him *all* the nations of the earth may be blessed (Gen 12: 2-3). The *one* people of Israel is made of *twelve* tribes and exists as *two* kingdoms after Solomon.<sup>31</sup> In the New Testament we have the mission of Paul to the Gentiles like that of Peter to the circumcized (Gal 2:7). From the beginning down to the middle of the second century, we have a collection of local Churches, which seem to have been very loosely related.

So the unity of the Church presupposes a multiplicity of Churches. The various Churches do not need to deny their origins or their specific situations. Their language, their history, their customs and traditions, their way of life and thought, and their personal structure, will differ fundamentally. The same thing is not suitable for every-one, at every time and in every place. The unity of the Church also makes the multiplicity of Churches flourish anew, through the diversity of God's callings, through the multiplicity of the gifts of the Spirit given to the Church and through the variety of the members of Christ and their functions.<sup>32</sup>

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30. Cf. E. Lanne, "The Local Church: its Catholicity and Apostolicity," *One in Christ*, 6 (1970), pp. 297 - 313.

31. Cf. J. L. Leuba, "Le Dualisme Israel - Juda," *A la Decouverte de l'espace Oecumenique*, Neuchâtel, 1967, p. 9 f.

32. Cf. H. Küng, *The Church*, N. Y. 1967, p. 274.

If the Church wants to be really close to men and women in all the different spheres of our highly complicated modern society, and to make them grow in the life of Christian freedom, then the forms of the individual local Communities (even on the parish and diocesan level) must be flexible and adaptable. Christians should get used to the fact that the structures, the way of life and the spiritual orientation of the various Communities have to be pluriform. There will, for example, be communities which are more progressively inclined and others which are more conservative in attitude. There will be Communities that are well-organized and others without any organization at all. The Church community life in a town cannot be of the same type as that of a village. The Church communities can, therefore, be very different from each other in form, and we should be on our guard against any attempt to force them to fit into a particular pattern.

The Church of God in each locality is to be allowed full growth of its life in Christ, in its originality and individuality. It is the one Christ and the one Gospel that give unity to the pluralistic ways in which the Gospel enters into contact with individuals, people and cultures embodied in each local Community. It is the love, mutual understanding and mutual service among the children of God living their characteristic life of Christian freedom (Gal 5:13), that should be the distinguishing mark of the Church in the different local Communities.

The great danger that exists in this respect comes from the projection of one's personal or local ideal on others and from the attempt to lead all others along one's own way. This is to go against the specifically Christian character of the Church. The Spirit of God must be allowed full play in the life of every local Community as in the life of every Christian. No one has the right to set limits to God's vocations, to quench the Spirit or to level out the member Churches. The manifestations of Jesus' Spirit in the different local Communities should be recognized as such and respected. The Churches of individual Communities should be allowed

to deal with their own particular problems, worries and tasks with more autonomy and freedom.

### **Different Spheres of Christian Freedom**

There are several spheres in which Christian freedom can and should be manifested on the level of the local Churches. We mention only a few of them.

#### **Freedom in Theology**<sup>33</sup>

If the Church wants to be, as it should be, the dwelling place of freedom, the theology of the Church must be free. In the unity of faith in one God, one Lord and one Gospel, there should be room for different theologies, systems, styles of thought, different terminologies, trends, schools, traditions, etc., represented by the different local Churches. Freedom is a necessary condition for pluralism in theology. While compulsion gives birth to uniformity, narrowness and vacuity, freedom gives birth to variety, multiplicity, breadth and richness. The faith, which is rooted in the unfathomable depths of the Word of God, is too rich to be exhausted or contained by any one theology.

Final doctrinal decisions will rest with those whom the Holy Spirit has placed to rule the Church of God. But this very responsibility of rule demands full recognition of the illumining and often charismatic activity of the Holy Spirit in the theologians and other believers representing the different local Churches.

The history of the Church is a witness to this variety of theology that is necessary in the Church.<sup>34</sup> It is certain that from Apostolic times the Christian message took on

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33. On this subject, cf. H. Küng, in *Freedom Today* N. Y. 1966, pp. 65-108.

34. Cf. E. Lanne, "Pluralism and Unity, The Possibility of a variety of Typologies within the same Ecclesial Allegiance," *One in Christ* 6 (1970), pp. 435-442.



different forms and expressions. Paul's message cannot be identified purely and simply with the point of view of any of the Synoptics, and John's message has accents of its own. The contrast between the theologies of the Greek Fathers and the Latin Fathers in the early Church, between the two Ecclesial visions that marked off the West from the East, and the various Eastern Churches from each other, as well as the division between the different theological schools of the West, is proof that there will always be several theologies within the One Church and the One Faith. It is in the healthy co-existence and mutual enlightenment of theologies represented by the different local Churches, that Christian Freedom should be manifested and exercised in the Church.

### **Freedom in Liturgy**

While there is only one God, one Lord, one Baptism and one Eucharist in the Church, there should be different rites, different languages, different peoples, different Communities, different forms of devotion, different styles of art, different prayers, chants and vestments. The variety of the liturgies adds to the beauty of the Church. The ability of the Church to rise above narrow exclusivism and to absorb all kinds of human cultures is really a sign of the credibility of the Universal Church, which is the dwelling place of freedom. If there were, in the Church, only one rite, one form of devotion, one style of art etc., this would be a sign, not of Christian freedom but of unchristian compulsion. No particular rite or liturgy can claim to represent alone the Church of Christ nor should the Church ever identify herself with any particular rite or liturgy. Every liturgy represents the Church. It is the treasure of all the liturgies shaped, developed and followed by the various local Churches, that enriches the Church, the home of the free children of God.

### **Freedom in Discipline**

In the unity of the One Church with One Head, there should be different forms of Church order, different orders of law, different traditions and customs, different systems of administration. But we often find in the Church a lack of

freedom which cripples free action and free initiative in the local Churches and also in individuals. There is often a flight from personal responsibility, disguising itself as loyalty to the Church, a timid lack of self-reliance pretending to be subordination.

In their very subordination the local Churches and the individuals in them should retain full, free responsibility, not transferable to anyone else, which, guided by the Spirit, dictates the discipline that is adapted to the place and people. This free responsibility should express itself in freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and freedom of action.<sup>35</sup>

On the part of the Church authorities, there should be a sincere attempt to help individuals experience the freedom of the children of God (freedom of conscience, of speech and of action). Thereby there should be implementation at the level of the local Communities, of the principles of co-responsibility and collegiality enunciated at the Second Vatican Council.<sup>36</sup> Though this may be difficult, it is necessary so that the Holy Spirit may speak to the Church through all its members. Through a more responsible participation in the life of the Church, all the members will grow mature in their Christian life of freedom, proper to the Children of God.<sup>37</sup>

Only a free Church, the Church as the free Community of the free children of God, is capable of realizing its destiny and fulfilling its purpose. Freedom in the Church is not a theory. It is a reality. It is a challenge. How much Christian freedom shall be made real in the Church, depends on you, on me, on all of us.

Mathew Vellanickal

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35. Cf. H. Küng, in *Freedom Today*, pp. 54-64.

36. On this, cf. L. J. Card. Suenens, *Co-responsibility in the Church*, N. Y. 1968

37. Cf. K. Gulligan, "Authority and Human Growth," *Spiritual Life*, Winter, 1969, pp. 241-246.

## BULLETIN:

# Indianization among the St Thomas Christians of Kerala\*

Thanks to Vatican II, there is here a cry all round for Indianization. The following is a brief documentation to show how a local Church of South India from its very start had no qualms in retaining Indian ways of life and the social customs of the Hindus from among whom they are said to have been converted by St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ. T. T. Krishnamachari, one-time Union Minister said of this Church:

"The Christian community.... those in S. India, have integrated themselves very closely with the general public. In fact their ways of life today are such that it is hardly possible to find out any difference either in appearance or in the manner in which they live between the Christians and the Hindus in S. India.... (Those) who have got any doubt about the place of Christianity in this country should go down South India and see how the Hindus and the Christians live as perfect brethren"(1).

The tradition is that St Thomas largely concerned himself with the conversion of Brahmins and high-caste people(2). It is no wonder that in family life and social ceremonies,

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\* The vernacular and Sanskrit words and phrases as found in the documents herein summarily quoted, have been transliterated anew according to phonetic symbols accepted to-day, in order to facilitate correct pronunciation (*General Editor*)

1. *Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, Report*, Allahabad, 1962, pp. 193 - 4.

2. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. I, p. 172.

personal habits and even religious observances, a close similarity is traceable between the St Thomas Christians and the high-caste Hindus. They observed nearly all the ceremonies of the caste Hindus connected with birth, marriage and death, and had almost a religious regard for them. The St Thomas Christians had continued these customs probably from the time of their conversion. Anantha Krishna Ayer, a learned Hindu anthropologist writes:

"It is almost certain that they were old customs traceable to a time when Christianity was introduced into Malabar, and accepted spontaneously without changing the indigenous character of the inhabitants"(3).

Cardinal Tisserant says that many of these customs came out of social requirements (4). We shall make a survey of these.

### Way of Life and Social Customs

The Christians, both Catholics and others, have even now two names, one Christian and the other a pet-name. In ordinary conversation they are always addressed by the pet-name which is indigenous in nature (5). There was the custom of adoption among the Christians if the parents had only female children. The Synod of Diamper declared against adoption and the division of property among other children together with one's own (6). In Malabar women had no rights of inheritance. This was the case of Brahmin women too. The daughter would be given a dowry and ornaments at her marriage. The Synod declared the custom illicit (7). The way

3. Anantha Krishna Ayer, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, Ernakulam 1926, p. 165.

4. Cardinal Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, Bombay, 1957, p. 164.

5. Actio IX Decr. XIII, CCLIV, Raulin p. 257.

6. "... in hac diocesi contingit, ut christiani filios ancillarum vernas, inque eorum domibus natos vel etiam alios quovis adoptent quamvis filios naturales habeant" Actio. Decr. XXI, CIXII, Raulin, pp. 263-264.

7. "Cum in hac Diocesi masculi solum inheredes instituantur, penitus exclusis feminis ...." Actio IX, Decr. XX, CCLXI. Raulin pp. 262 - 263.



of dressing and the external appearance of the Hindus and Christians were the same. So also were the wearing of a tuft of hair on the head and the boring of the ear-lobes for ornaments. The Synod asked the Christians to use a different dress and wanted the men, at any rate, to stop boring the lobes of their ears <sup>(8)</sup>. The custom among Christian men of wearing ear-rings such as the *kaṭukkan*, like their Hindu counterparts, has now completely stopped. Brown says:

“When the Portuguese came to Malabar they found it easy to distinguish Christians from Nairs, although their dress was the same. In those days they were naked to the waist and from the waist to the knees wore a fine cloth often ornamented with gold bands woven into it. They also wore gold ornaments on their arms. The hair of the older men was worn long, and tied at the side with a piece of coloured silk. It often had a cross of gold or silver attached to it. When going away from their districts, men would wear a long white or blue coat which Gouvea calls a *cabayac*”<sup>(9)</sup>.

The metal cross in the tuft of hair was the sign that distinguished them from non-Christians. Women, in those days, had many varieties of ornaments for their ears, arms, neck and feet, but no ornaments for the nose. Only the St Thomas Christian women were permitted to use the kinds of ornaments worn by the Brahmin women<sup>(10)</sup>. Bridegrooms wore a flower of gold on the tuft of their hair <sup>(11)</sup>, or a gold crown and a gold pectoral cross <sup>(12)</sup>. The gold ornament called

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8. Actio, IX, Decr. XVII, CCLVIII, Raulin, pp. 220-661.

9. Brown. L. W., *The Indian Christianity of St Thomas Christians*, Cambridge, 1956 p. 199.

10. Brown, *Op. cit.*, Ch. VII.

11. Vincenzo Maria, *Il Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, Roma 1672, C. V.

12. P. J. Podipara, CMI, *The Thomas Christians*, D. L. T. London, 1970 p. 81.

the *tāli* or *minnu* indicates that a woman is married and is even now in use among both Brahmins and St Thomas Christians, but a cross of 21 minute beads distinguishes the Christian *tāli* from the Brahmin one <sup>(13)</sup>.

Both Hindus and Christians used to bathe everyday and especially before festivals and fasts <sup>(14)</sup>. During fasts, they abstained from meat and from conjugal pleasures. Both the high-caste Hindus and the Christians observed a period of of pollution in the house after a death. The rituals for the new-born child (*jātakarma*) and for the first food given to it (*anna prāśana*), and others for the dead (*cāttam* or *śrāddha*), were common to the St Thomas Christians and the Brahmins and other noble castes with understandable differences of religious significance. The new born is fed with a paste of gold and honey, in both cases. The father of every Syrian Christian child, thirty-six hours after its birth, mixes a little honey, ghee and powdered gold and puts this into the mouth of the infant <sup>(15)</sup>. The Syrian Christians (St Thomas Christians) of Thiruvancode (Dhariyakal) still continue the ancient custom according to which the words *Māraṇ Iṣo Miṣiha* (Lord Jesus Christ) and the child's name are uttered into the ears of the new born babe. When it is baptized a *pūṇṭil* (the sacred thread worn by the Brahmins) is blessed and put on the child. Afterwards the *pūṇṭil* is put by until the child attains boyhood when again it is worn. The boys and men among the Thiruvancode Christians still wear the *pūṇṭil*.

13. Ibid. p. 90.

14. Actio. IX, Decr. I, CCXLII. Raulin pp. 249-249.

Actio VIII, Decr. XIII, CCXIII, Raulin p. 228.

"A common kind of preliminary ceremonial purification.... This purification of water forms an integral part of the customs of birth, baptism, marriage, death and in fact at every critical period of life of all Hindu caste men as well as of many Christians." A. K. Ayer. *Op. cit.* p. 94.

15. J. C. Panjikaran, *The Syrian Church in Malabar*. Trichinopoly, 1914, p. 6.

Six months after the birth of the child the ceremony of *anna prāśana* (the first feeding with rice) was performed. It has generally fallen into disuse among the Christians, but remains among the Hindus. The mother's grandfather would bring the child to the church wrapped in a piece of silk cloth. The father would sit on a low stool, with the child on his lap. A priest then would place a banana leaf with sweet rice, banana (the small variety) and jaggery before the father (as the Brahmins do). The father took a pinch of the mixture three times and placed it in the child's mouth. Among the Sudhists the child would be on the mother's lap <sup>(16)</sup>. After reaching home, the ceremony concluded with a sumptuous feast.

When the signs of death appeared the dying person was laid on a bed facing the East. Till recently there was the custom, in certain parts of the country, of laying the dying person on the floor (a Hindu custom) <sup>(17)</sup>. As soon as the person breathed his last, his toes and thumbs were tied with a piece of cloth (a Brahmin custom) <sup>(18)</sup>. A crucifix was placed at the head of the corpse between two lighted candles <sup>(19)</sup>. A few hours after death the corpse was anointed and taken to be washed in warm water. Brahmins likewise wash the dead body just before the cremation <sup>(20)</sup>. Next the dead body was laid out on a bed of state in a prominent place, with the face looking towards the East. No one would prepare or eat food in the house until the corpse had been taken away. The same restriction is met with among Brahmins and other

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16. Thomas Whitehouse, *Lingerings of Light in a dark land*, London, 1873 p. 63.

17. The Caste Hindus always lay down their dying person on the floor just before their death. Cfr. Twice born p. 142.

18. Placid, *Fontes Juris Canonici Syro - Malankarensium II*, Vatican, 1940 p. 253.

19. The Brahmins would place a lighted *nila vilaku* where the death occurred.

20. Twice born p. 149.

Hindus<sup>(21)</sup>. After the burial the priest and the people would return home for a slight repast or *break-fast* (*paṭṭinikkañṇi*). As soon as the priest came he would be given a tender coconut (*kariku*) to drink. The priest would bless the *kariku*, drink a little, and give the rest to be tasted by the other people<sup>(22)</sup>. In this feast there would not be any meat or fish. It was purely vegetarian, like its counterpart in Brahmin rituals for the dead<sup>(23)</sup>. After the feast a plate with cumin seed (*jīrakam*) was placed before the priest who after the liturgical prayers for the occasion would bless the *jīrakam* and take a little and eat it. Then all the people one after another would come and accept 'the peace' from the extended hand of the priest and take a few seeds of *jīrakam* to eat. This was the form in which the family broke their fast after a burial. The poor would be given food and money. Then plans were made for subsequent feasts in honour of the deceased. In having a number of these commemorative occasions the St Thomas Christians show their Brahmin heritage. The chief one was "*pulakuli*" (which literally signifies the formal bathing - *kuli* - for purification from the defilement - *pula* - caused by a death in the house). It should take place before the 13th-day after the burial; the 15th-day *pulakuli* is characteristic of the Nairs and not of the first caste. The Brahmins always observe it on the 10th or the 12th day after the funeral; so did the St Thomas Christians<sup>(24)</sup>. Here again meat, fish and eggs were not served. Brahmin protocol was followed all through. People of all castes came to help in the preparation of the feast. Each caste had its traditional work to do on such occasions. In former days all would go and bathe and only then set about their apportioned tasks. The rule with regard to the bath is not in use now.

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21. The Rites of the Twice born, p. 154.

22. D. Ferroli, S. J., *The Jesuits in Malabar*, Bangalore 1951 Vol. II, p. 160.

23. The coconut and *kariku* are very important among the Hindus in death ceremonies.

24. The regulations for officiating at the *Pulakuli* feast.

Cfr. *The Archdiocesan Statutes of Ernakulam*, n. 173, p. 113.



After a death in the house, one young man in the family used to grow beard (*dīkṣa*) for a year. When in *dīkṣa*, he was not permitted to marry and was expected to lead an ascetic life. In former days there were many feasts subsequent to *pulakūḷi*, in observance of the 17th, 28th, and 41st day after death. The last-mentioned of these is common among the Brahmins. Sometimes the feasts extended for a whole year, through all the months from the day of the death. The death anniversary is called the *cāttam* (*śrāddha*). Parents would not observe the *śrāddha* of their deceased children. It was the children who commemorated their beloved parents every year on the *śrāddha*. This is another of the customs that are slowly dying out. At the *cāttam* (*śrāddha*) of the St Thomas Christians *ṭaṭṭaṇṭār*-s (priests) and *ṣemṁāṣa*-s (clerics) officiated.<sup>(25)</sup>

The Hindus divide a man's life into different stages: *brahmacarya* (the period of study of the scriptures by a youth before marriage); *gārhasthya* (the life of a householder); *vānaprastha* (the life of a hermit) and *sannyāsa* (the life of renunciation). The Christians had their own adaptations of these stages in keeping with their religion. The Hindus fulfil the objects of these stages according to Hindu teaching and rituals. The Christians followed the ways of sanctity prescribed by Christian doctrine. While Hindus visited their holy places like Kāśi and Rāmēswaram for penance and perfection, the Christians visited shrines and places of pilgrimage at Mylapore, Malayattoor, etc. The Hindus and Christians celebrated the ceremonies in connection with infancy such as *jātakarma*, *annaprāśaṇa*; and in connection with boyhood such as *vidyādāna* and *vivāha*. Child marriage was the rule then. The Hindus performed it according to their religious rites, the Christians followed their Christian version compatible with the Christian religion and doctrine. Most of the social customs and ceremonies were performed in the same way. In *śrāddha* the Hindus bathe, eat and offer rice to the crows, but :

25. Doc. 120. (Goa C. A. Finem Anni 1557) Cfr. Wicki, S. J., Doc. Ind. III (Roma 1954) p. 805. Foot-note 12. Regulations for officiating at the *śrāddha* Cfr. *The Archdiocesan Statutes of Ernakulam*, n. 113-114.

“The Christians of St Thomas follow the custom of *chatam*. The priest eats it (the rice), but he does not make use of the ceremony of offering the rice because that is something purely pagan”(26).

There is historical evidence to prove that *sannyāsa* or the religious life was practised among the St Thomas Christians. Paulinus of St Bartholomew makes mention of ruins of monasteries in Angamale, Idappally, Mailakompu (XVIII century). At Angamale one could see, until very recently, cells belonging to certain families. Occasionally the owners of these cells used to spend a few days in them in prayer and recollection (27). The training for priesthood among the St Thomas Christians in olden days was something like the ancient system of Indian education called *Guru kula vāsa* (staying at the house of the teacher).

National festivals like *Ōṇam*, *Viṣu* (New Year day), etc. were celebrated with various martial sports and contests and the Chrisians used to take active part in the festivities. The Synod restrained them from doing so, because the festivities were believed to be in honour of the pagan gods(28).

The Copper Plate grants of the Mahārājas gave them many social privileges for festive occasions especially that of marriage.

“Of all these various Christian communities, old and new, now in Kerala the ancient St Thomas Christians alone had the high privileges of using silk umbrellas (*kattakuṭa*), day-lamps (*ṭakalvilaku*), walking cloths (*paṭāṭa*), palanquin (*antālam*), band (*paṇca vādya*), lingual cheers (*kurava*), body guards and forerunners to clear the way (*muṇṇaṭayum*)

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26. Diogo Concalves, S.J., *Historia do Malavar*; edited by J. Wicki, S.J., (Munster Westfalen, 1955) p. 63.

27. P. J. Podipara, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

28. Actio IX, Decr. IV, CCXLV, Raulin p. 251.

*mun collum*), elephants to ride on, festal sheds (*pantal*), carpets, slaves, the title of *Mappila*, gate-houses (*patippura*), ornaments, etc. These privileges (72 in all) were granted to the St Thomas Christians by the Cheraman Perumal, the Emperor of Kerala, Ayyan Adigal, the King of Venad (800-A.D.), as recorded in the Copper plate grants.”<sup>(29)</sup>

These privileges belonged only to the Brahmins and the princes of the royal houses. The St Thomas Christians were accorded the right of using them <sup>(30)</sup>.

### Mode of Worship

In ancient times churches were built like Hindu temples, of wood or stone. The ancient church of Palayur was constructed of wood. Fr Fenicio, S.J. wrote between 1600 and 1607 that he was building a stone church outside the ancient teak-wood church of Palayur <sup>(31)</sup>. The structures of the old churches imitated the Hindu style and were similar to Hindu temples <sup>(32)</sup>. Figures like mermen, animals, hunting scenes, lotuses and peacocks were often pictured on the walls of the church. Externally the church looked like a Hindu temple except for the cross. In every church the cross was the central figure often with peacocks on either side. Lamps, silk umbrellas and other paraphernalia also looked like those used in temples. The Portuguese reconstructed most of the churches according to the Portuguese style. Gouvea says:

“One of them (the Franciscans) Friar Vincent... went and stationed at Cranganore and then he went about frequently to preach in their churches,

29. *Kerala Society Papers*, Trivandrum, 1930, II series 8 appendix note on p. 31.

30. Zaleski, *The Saints of India* (Mangalore (1915), p. 225.

31. Du Jarric. *Thesaurus rerum Indicarum*, III lib. 2 cap. 5, pp. 50-51.

32. Raulin p. 394.

and he built some in their midst after our style, since all of their old churches were built after the fashion of heathen pagodas."

The churches at Kundara, Kalluppara and Kayankulam still keep the ancient style. The ancient churches had streets called *annāṭi* - es, attached to them where the Christians lived on either side engaged in trade, commerce and other occupations. The Christian church is called the *palli*. Gouvea says:

"All the ancient churches were made in the manner of pagodas of the Gentiles, but full, all of them, of crosses after the manner of the cross of St Thomas, which they call St Thomas Cross".<sup>(33)</sup>

The Christian Churches have flagstuffs at the western end of the churchyard like Hindu temples. The hoisting of the flag marks the beginning of a festival among the Hindus and the Christians and at the conclusion of the ceremonies the flag is struck. Church processions also looked like those of the Hindus. In olden days sometimes the two communities lent each other the ceremonial equipment for the processions, such as musical instruments, silk umbrellas (*muttukuṭa*-s), *katina* guns, and elephants. But the crosses carried by priests, and the Holy Bible by the celebrant, distinguished the Christian processions from those of the Hindus. A copy of the Bible adorned with gold or silver and precious stones was kept in every church. "It was not taken out", says Vincent Maria, "for private use since they thought it improper to take out of the sanctuary the foundation of the faith."<sup>(34)</sup>

In former days, on the 3rd of July, certain Christian families celebrated in their homes, *cattam* (*śrāddha*) of St Thomas which they called the *cāttam* of their *Muttappan* (great grand-father). On the occasion of feasts the people would bring offerings to the church in the form of money, animals or fruits and they would receive, in return a little fried rice or cake like the *prasāda* (blessed sweets) of the Hindus.

33. Gouvea, Journada Fol. 60 v. col. 1; ibidem fol. 73.

34. Cf. P. J. Podipara, *Op. cit.* pp. 86-87.



There were also 'agape' feasts in which the clergy used to sit on the floor of the sanctuary and the laity on that of the nave<sup>(35)</sup>. Today the Catholics of the St Thomas Christians eat outside their churches.

Baptismal names were mostly scriptural, but these underwent modifications, like those of non-Christians. The first male and female children were given respectively the names of the paternal grandfather and grandmother; the second male and female children received the names of the maternal grandfather and grandmother. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to which the St Thomas Christians have had the greatest devotion, freshly baked (as a rule) leavened bread was taken to the celebrant on a fresh leaf, preferably lotus leaf, before the Offertory<sup>(36)</sup>. Indian culture was most evident in marriage celebrations. The ceremonies of marriage observed by the St Thomas Christians were socially very similar to those of the Brahmins. We know some of the marriage customs of the Christians from the decrees of the Synod of Diamper, and hence these must have been in existence previous to it. For the men there were ceremonial baths<sup>(37)</sup> and a ceremonial shave (*aṅkam cārttal*) on the occasion of marriage. The marriage token of the Nambudiris and of Christians was the same and called the "tāli" which the boy tied around the neck of the girl during the ceremony, but a cross of 21 minute beads distinguishes the Christian tāli from

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35. Vincenzo Maria, *Op. cit.* c. vi.

36. Ibid. Cf. P. J. Podipara, *Op. cit.* pp. 87-8.

37. The Portuguese found no reason for a bath in connection with the marriage celebration. The Synod says: "*Quantum autem ad lotionem, nulla ratione sibi suadeant eas vel ad spiritualem vel ad divinum cultum et temporalem reverentiam pertinere.*" But the bath according to the Hindus symbolically signifies both internal and external purity of the body and the soul before the sacrament of matrimony is received. The Christians continued the old custom as it was very significant to them even in a Christian sense. Decr. XVI, CXCIX, Raulin, p. 215

that of the Brahmins (as we have seen already). The thread for the *tāli* was prepared in the same way by both denominations. It was woven from threads drawn out of the bridal veil, called the *mantrakṛti* <sup>(38)</sup>. There were, and are still, many other ceremonies, connected with marriage, which cannot be gone into detail here. We have spoken above of the various social privilege and the high social status of the St Thomas Christians. It was on the occasion of marriage that they were most exercised and displayed. Divorce was unheard of among the St Thomas Christians. Widows would not marry until after the period of mourning which lasted for one year.

As for the anointing of the sick we have little information except that priests would visit them, bless them, read to them or over them extracts from the Gospels and place on their bodies a piece of a palm leaf with verses from the Bible written on it. We have already spoken about the funeral services, which came to an end in the church. Every church had a cemetery attached to it.

The community feeling of the St Thomas Christians, or rather, their sense of communion, was clearly manifest in the congregational nature of their worship in the common active participation of clergy and laity. Similarly it was evident in the choice of candidates for priesthood and in the administration of church affairs and properties.

The community of the faithful of a place, or 'parish' presented the candidates for priesthood to their Bishop through a letter patent called *deśakkuri*, as they were going to be ordained for and maintained by, the parish <sup>(39)</sup>. The choice of candidates and their ordination were celebrated with solemnities similar to marriage. The newly ordained would be ornamented and accorded grand receptions. The administration of church properties was the responsibility of an

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38. Brown, L. W., *Op. cit.*, p. 91.

39. P. J. Podipara, *Op. cit.*, p. 91.

assembly of male adults attached to the church, called a *palli yōgam* as in the case of Hindu temples <sup>(40)</sup>.

Thus the ancient community of the St Thomas Christians can be considered an example (though not flawless and perfect) of an Indian Catholic Church. It grew up from the beginning, in Indian soil, perfectly indigenous, and as such was accepted and respected. It still holds out a lesson to us. Many foreign missionaries could not understand the social life and customs of India and therefore failed to appreciate them. This is evident from the Synod of Diamper. The old way of life and the established social customs were discouraged and tampered with. The resulting Church was a hybrid, neither Indian nor Western, and therefore hardly able to contribute to the fullness of the Universal Church.

Palai

A. Cherukarakkunnel

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40. Ibid. p. 189. Id. "The Thomas Christians and Adaptation", in *The Eastern Churches Review*, 1970.

# Book Reviews

Von Balthasar, Hans Urs: **CHURCH AND WORLD**

(Trans. A. V. Littledale with Alexander Dru, New York: Herder and Herder, 1967, 178 pp. \$ 4. 95 )

Today theology has turned its attention from the universal to the particular, to the local Church, the material world and the individuality of the human body. It is with great expectation that one begins to read an eminent theologian like Von Balthasar when he applies his long experience and theological acumen to this new area of the material world as it enters the life of the supernatural Church.

Von Balthasar starts with the idea that any distinctions and oppositions between spiritualities do not serve any useful purpose. What is needed is a deeper understanding of the mission of the whole Church. This "program of integralism" has to turn its attention to the World today, since "it is no infallible sign of the spirit to renounce all hold on worldly positions, all means of propaganda, organization, and centralization, all technical methods of communication and dissemination." These are means, and only means to be used by the spirit.

The Church was conscious of herself at every stage of history. She did not have to create a self-contained ecclesiology for that. Only in confrontation with the Reformation in the sharp opposition between those who were in and those outside, did an ecclesiology emerge. Then the emphasis was more on form and structure, and very little on content. The centuries following the Council of Trent were preoccupied with building a bridge between this external form and the internal spiritual content. But today a new ecclesiological thinking has emerged drawing its sustenance solely from the Lord and his love. The Church is not purely an object of



contemplation, the golden picture of a virgin up in clouds, but a reality "wholly gathered up in her act of worship in which she becomes the channel for the all uniting love of Christ." (1. 26)

In this view the unrest concerning papal centralism and opposition to a domineering hierarchy are not a refusal to feel with the Church, but "the expression of a deep conviction that the hierarchy has indeed a sacral function for the Church, but that this function is wholly one of service." The hierarchy is not merely a "manifesting corpus" of the mystery of the Church, but a "serving office" that has to transform the hidden holiness into an external holiness of life and love. The Church has to manifest Christ to the world by sharing in his self-sacrifice, in his solitude which is the epiphany of the Trinitarian solitude, "ultimately of the primordial solitude of the Father in the generation of the Son."

Hence the Church has not her centre within herself, but outside in Christ and in the world. Only this vision of the Church will generate a true love for her. In this fruitful union between Christ and Church in the world, marriage finds its theological meaning. Virginity too appears in its proper light not as a Gnostic depreciation of the body but as a "heightening of the individual Sacrament of marriage".

The second chapter examines the origin of the office in the Church and finds its full meaning in the total self-renunciation and following demanded of the Apostles. Every Christian is called to follow Christ and bear witness to him. But in this universal command of following there slowly emerges the "form" in which charisma and ministry, authority and love, zeal and discretion, are united. The unity and distribution of these various gifts and functions are not in the Church itself but in God, in the Spirit who assigns to each member its own special gifts. "The totality whose functions the baptized become is not an industrial or administrative collective, but the person of Jesus Christ, divine and human in his function of revealing and imparting the triune personal

life of God." (p. 105) What resolves the apparent opposition between person and function is the functional and representative character of Christian existence itself. Hence an ecclesiology that assigns the functional to the clergy and the personal to the laity is wrong.

In the third chapter which poses the question "Who is the Church?" Von Balthasar examines the relationship of the Church to Christ. The Church arising from the Second Adam sleeping on the Cross is the prolongation and outpouring of his two-fold nature on the one hand, and on the other, confronts Christ as "some one", a person. In this context the author goes on to explain the relationship of the Church to Mary, the type of the Church, and to the Holy Spirit. The Church is the Body of Christ animated by the one Spirit, and at the same time, the bride of Christ. It is in the open consciousness of the Church that God and man encounter.

The book closes with a short chapter on "The Church and Israel" where it is declared that the dialogue with the Jews must be resumed where it was left off a thousand years ago, namely in the pulsating heart of the Bible. There you find the election and reprobation of Israel in which reprobation there appears the extension of the election to the Gentiles to form the Spiritual Israel rooted in the Old Israel. This rejection of historical Israel points also to the eschatological salvation common to it and the Church. Thus there is a definite continuity between Israel and the Church in the dialectics of salvation history.

Von Balthasar's book contains several profound insights and is deeply theological. This technically theological tone may be forbidding to the ordinary reader. Even though it deals with problems intimate to the life of every Christian it may be intelligible only to the professional theologian. Another important defect of the book is that the term "World" does not get sufficient attention in the discussion. There is only tangential reference to the deep human problems implied in the mystery of the Church. But there is no doubt that Von Balthasar has provided some solid material for close reading and serious discussion for those who dedicate themselves to the ministry of the Church of Christ.

Fries, Heinrich: **ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH**

(Trans. Thomas O'Meara O. P., Dublin and Melbourne, Gill and Son, 1965, 174 pp)

Most books on the Church start with the definition of the Church and try to deduce general conclusions from that definition. The book under review follows a rather phenomenological method. It starts with what the Church does to the individual: "The Church is a reality already present to the individual. The Church receives me into itself; through the faith it gives to me and through the sacrament it pours over me, it makes me a member and a Christian. The Church is the mother of believers, mediating faith and administering Baptism; it is *Mater ecclesia*." (page 8) So the book is rightly called "Aspects of the Church": It looks at the Church as a phenomenon. The church today is viewed in her self-expression and self-explanation as the Mystical Body of Christ. Her striving for an integrated whole is seen in her sacramental and liturgical line where she finds her centre and highest point in the Mass as liturgy of the Word, as sacrifice and sacrament. From there she endeavours to make herself incarnate in the actual needs and aspirations of men today. But first and foremost she is a eucharistic community gathered together around the one Bread and one Chalice. The book goes on to investigate the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria and others to prove this point. There is a beautiful chapter on the place of the protestant churches in the catholic view, according to which all who are baptized belong to the catholic church. We have to take a positive view not only of baptism but of a number of other elements that link the catholic and protestant churches: prayer, faith, spirituality, the Scriptures and so on. But above all the encounter with the protestants is one in faith. Only that which is lived on the existential level can be reflected upon in faith. Hence only in deep and sincere prayer can any meaningful encounter with protestants take place. Catholics should have also a historical sense of gratitude in meeting protestants when they re-call all the great services

done to the Church by the Reformation, especially in the fields of Biblical scholarship, the use of the vernacular in religious services, and in the development of religious music and of church art in general.

Going through the different chapters of the book one may wonder whether it has any unity. This unity will be completely missed if the last chapter is skipped. It dwells on the human context of the Church. The Church is one as the mystery of God's self revelation to man. All her diversity and plurality come from the human side. Though she is "a revelation, a word, a work, an event that happened to men", the centre of her mystery is the person of Jesus Christ, the Word-made-flesh. Hence the Church should relate itself to humanity, to the ideas of men. Christ is not *a* man among men, nor is the Church *one* religion among religions. Christ is "One and Only" in relationship to all men. The Church is the realization of the newness brought to humanity by Christ. She is the unity of all men in brotherhood created by breaking down all the barriers of race and class. "Christ fashions a new form of his own existence in this Church, living in the currents of the world and of history, and in his new existence Christ continues to work in word and Sacrament." It is to make manifest this continued presence of Christ that the Church is again formed as people of God". Grounded in Christ, the Church should bring into view "every dimension of whatever is human." She shows the transcendence of man over the entire world, since for his salvation Christ became incarnate. The human aspect of teaching and preaching, and of liturgy and sacramental life, and of other details of the life of the Church is beautifully brought out in the book. This human dimension elevated in Christ constitutes the unifying thread of all the aspects of the Church that are described.

If there is any criticism that can be levelled against the book it is the lack of emphasis on the divine interiority of the Church. The human side of the Church apparently conceived according to the thinking of existential phenomenology is perhaps overstressed. An equally important side is that in the Church all flesh including man becomes the Word of God.



Hence all the human aspects, the existential encounter among men, the brotherhood of all beyond barriers of race, class and nation, the feelings and aspirations of men integrated in preaching, liturgy and Sacraments, all have only a functional value in the Church. Primarily the Church is only the Body of the Word of God, the fullness of him who fills all things. Everything should lead back to this interiority of the Church in Christ. Care must be taken that in the midst of the heat and enthusiasm generated by present-day humanistic philosophies the divine aspect of the Church is not lost sight of.

But in view of the conservative mentality of a great many Christians today, who find security and satisfaction in the triumphalist and static conception of the Church as a super-market of supernatural goods, Dr Fries is justified in laying stress on the human and flexible aspects of the Church.

J. B. Chethimattam

Floristan, Casiano:

## THE PARISH EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITY

(London and Melbourne, Sheed and Ward, 1965, 240 pp.  
Trans. John F. Byrnie.)

This is a hand-book on pastoral theology. But it places the life in the parish in the context of both history and theology. The parish came into existence long before the evolution of Canon Law. Besides the apostles who were in charge of the universal Church there were bishops, priests and deacons in the christian communities ordained for their functions through the imposition of hands and prayer. They had different functions in the local church as elders, overseers and the like, and constituted a body of priesthood. These local churches were presided over by a bishop and they were divided into small communities under the charge of one priest or more. The Eucharist was the community meal celebrated as a memorial to the death of Christ. In the course of history, these local churches developed and were incorporated closely into the universal organization of the Church.

The ministry of the local church can be reduced to preaching of the Faith and celebration of the Sacrament, and thus constitutes the evangelical and sacramental dimensions of the Church. The Church continues the incarnation of Christ and is therefore necessarily linked to space and time. The radical difference between the church and other societies is that all the universal church is found within the local church. The book details the marks of the local church: it is a eucharistic community presided over by a bishop, but it is also open to the universal church through its allegiance to the episcopate and to the primacy of the Pope. It is a juridical reality presenting the universal in the particular as a living cell of the Mystical Body of Christ. It is a missionary community bound to bear salvation for all men with whom christians form one *Polis*. It is also a worshipping and praying community gathered together in faith and charity. This aspect

of the local church as a concrete universal should inspire all the life of the parish so that united with its bishop it lives in fulness in the life of Church.

But there are several important issues that are only hinted at in the book and not properly resolved. One is the role of the local church in the life of the universal Church. So far there has been the trend of the universal hierarchy of the Church to impose itself on the local churches, to organize, control and unify them according to the rules and laws of a common code. Bishops were considered governors sent by the Pope to rule the individual churches in his name. With the present emphasis on the local church there is a danger that the world is going to be a global parish according to the predictions of Marshal McLuhan and other prophets of the communications explosion. Local churches may become closed communities concerned only with their local problems, with no thought about the "catholic" community of Christ as concerned with the welfare of all men. A serious discussion as to how this danger can be avoided is very vital in the present situation. This can be achieved only if the idea of the communion of churches, that characterised the early Church, is revived. This implies the collegiality of bishops not merely as a theoretical doctrine but as really carried out in the government of the universal Church. Not only should the universal Church become incarnate in the local church, but the local churches should, in a democratic spirit, involve themselves in the life and activities of all other churches.

Another issue glossed over in the book is the meaning of the leadership of the bishop in the local church. The bishop is a member of the community, the centre of convergence of all its forces, the leader, teacher and guide. This leadership is symbolically expressed in the Sacred Liturgy over which the bishop presides. But here again a radical change in the conception of leadership is called for. The Roman concept of leadership is too monarchical to allow sufficient originality and freedom to the members of the local church. The true leader in the community of the disciples of Christ only ministers to the freedom and originality of his

brethren in a spirit of *diakonia*. This attitude is specially needed in the Church today when it is actively involved in the socio-political problems of the people. As regards these the bishop may not have sufficient knowledge and competence to guide and lead others in any kind of activity. The leadership of the bishop should foster and encourage leadership by competent laymen, for the fulfilment of their Christ-given task of sanctifying the world.

There are several other problems that need further development and clarification in the spirit of the post-Vatican II Church, such as the involvement of the local church in the temporal problems of the community, the challenge of Ecumenism, and the very constitution of the local church in view of the psychological, sociological and vocational factors that bind men together and create new communities. But these problems are different for different parts of the world and no one can expect in any book solutions that can be applied to all parts of the world in the same manner. Hence 'local church' means also the creation of a local theology.

At the end of the book there is a good bibliography very useful for students of parish ecclesiology. The book is very timely and valuable for an understanding of the theology initiated by Vatican II.

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